

Berlusconi to resign today

ROME (R) — The government of Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi will resign on Wednesday, Deputy Prime Minister Giuseppe Tanzi told television on Tuesday. The government will resign tomorrow, Mr. Tanzi said, a member of the far right National Alliance, said on TG3 public television. The election campaign begins tomorrow, Mr. Tanzi said. Mr. Berlusconi, battling to survive in the face of a revolt by his Northern League coalition partner, prepared to address the chamber of deputies (Lower House) on Wednesday at the start of a confidence debate. Cabinet spokesman Giuliano Ferrara said earlier that Mr. Berlusconi wanted to stay on as prime minister, even at the head of a minority government, to lead Italy to early elections if he lost the parliamentary showdown.

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Commission presents high-incentive draft law to encourage investments

Highlights include additional exemptions for land, machinery and production-oriented equipment

AMMAN (Petra) — The Royal Commission for Reform and Modernisation (RCRM) on Tuesday submitted to the government a draft law aimed at encouraging investments in Jordan. The draft law is intended to create a new climate for economic investments based on clear and solid foundations, the RCRM said.

The RCRM said in a statement that the draft law was aimed at increasing domestic income, stimulating production and helping the country attain self-sufficiency.

Stressing that investment is the backbone for development, the statement said the draft law also aims at finding jobs for the unemployed, fighting poverty and ensuring a higher standard of living for the Jordanian citizens.

Following is an unofficial translation of the draft law: Article 1: This law shall be called the Law for Encouraging Investments and it becomes effective upon its publication in the official Gazette.

Article 2: The following words and phrases should have the meaning appearing next to it unless it is specified otherwise:

The Minister: The minister of industry and trade.
The Board: The Higher Board of Investment formed in accordance with this law.
The General Manager: The general manager of the Investment Promotion Department.

The Committee: The committee for encouraging investment formed in accordance with this law.
The project: Any investment activity which falls under the provisions of this law and the regulations and instructions pertaining to it.

Fixed assets: The equipment, machines, tools and other supplies used specifically in the project.
Production requirements: The raw and intermediate

materials and any other input necessary for the industrial production of goods.

Fees: Import, customs and other fees required on the fixed assets and production input.

Taxes: Property (real estate) tax and any other tax required in accordance with the laws in force on fixed assets and production requirements.

The Investor: The person or the legal entity investing in the Kingdom in accordance with the provisions of this law.

Production capacity: The designed or absorbed capacity of the project.

Article 3: The provisions of this law are applicable to projects which the committee approves in accordance with a special regulation issued for that purpose.

Article 4: For the purpose of this law, the Kingdom is divided into four development regions: A, B, C and D, according to the degree of

development for each one which should be specified by a decision from the board and published in the official gazette.

Article 5: A) For the purpose of this law the phrase "the foreign invested money" means:

i) The cash transfer to the Kingdom through licensed banks;
ii) The assets in kind which are imported to be invested in the project or to have it enlarged, developed or modernised;

iii) The profits, returns and reserves, resulting from investing the foreign money in investment projects, if added to the capital of these projects or if invested in other projects approved in accordance with the provisions of this law;
iv) The intangible rights such as licences, intellectual rights, trade marks registered in the Kingdom and invested in its projects and owned by non-residents;

B) The committee will evaluate the volume of the capital and decide whether it was used for the purposes of the project and whether it is in the form of capital pertinent to items ii and iv from paragraph (A) above.

Article 6: A) The fixed assets of the project will be exempt from fees and taxes on condition that they are provided within four years from the date of approving the project.

B) Spare parts will be exempt from fees and taxes on condition that the value does not exceed 15 per cent of the total value of the fixed assets for which the spare parts are to be used and on condition that they are bought within 10 years from the date of starting production.

C) The fixed assets needed to expand, develop or modernise the project will be exempt of fees and taxes if the expansion, development or modernisation will result

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King, Prince condole Masri family

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Tuesday called at Al Masri family residence and offered his condolences to the family members over the death of Hikmat Al Masri, the family head, who passed away in his hometown of Nablus on Tuesday Dec. 13. The Masri family thanked the King for his visit, saying that it meant a lot to them. The King was accompanied by Royal Court Chief Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan also visited the Masri family to condole them. The Prince later visited Al Huneidi family and condoled them over the death of Ibrahim Rashed Al Huneidi, the sheikh of the Al Huneidi tribes.



An old woman stands weeping near the remains of her house destroyed by a bomb blast Monday evening in Grozny (AFP photo)

Thousands flee Grozny as Russians step up assault

GROZNY (Agencies) — Thousands of people demonstrated for peace outside Grozny, the besieged capital of Chechnya on Tuesday, as Russian forces attacked civilian targets, stampeding hundreds of people into fleeing the city.

Russian troops, sent in on Dec. 11 to crush the Caucasus republic's three-year-old independence drive, launched a fierce push south from positions less than 15 kilometres northeast of the centre of Grozny.

Planes dropped bombs along the road east from Grozny; to Argun and a burned-out car and blood could be seen on the route. Chechen defensive positions could not be seen.

The bombing, preceded by a night of air raids on civilian positions in Grozny itself, appeared to be part of a campaign to terrorise civilians into leaving Grozny before an eventual ground offensive.

Only Grozny's southern exits were open and hundreds of panicked people streamed out of the city in packed buses, or crowded around bus stops.

On the east-west road crossing Chechnya, on both sides of Grozny, thousands of people, mostly women and children, formed a human chain in the snow and called for peace and an end to the attacks.

The Chechen government of President Dzhokhar Dudayev had called for the demonstration, which stretched at least five kilometres along the snowy road.

Russian troops appeared to have a firm hold on the northwest of Grozny, at the village of Pervomayskaya, and northeast at Petropavlovskaya.

But Israel is reluctant to commit itself to a redeployment, out of fear for the security of 120,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank following the killings of 45 Israelis since the launch of self-rule in May.

Faisal Hussein, the leading Palestinian figure in the territory, said the PLO would be willing to consider any Israeli offer of an initial withdrawal from certain towns such as Jenin or Bethlehem.

"We are ready to talk about it if there is a calendar for an overall withdrawal," Mr. Hussein told journalists. But he stressed "there is no question of allowing the creation of islands of autonomy" on the West Bank.

Mr. Hussein said the declaration must be implemented, with the Palestinians insisting that free elections could not be held under Israeli occupation.

Mr. Peres said Monday that Israel "does not intend to change the declaration of principles unilaterally but is wary of carrying out the planned redeployment of its military forces."

The Palestinian self-rule authority headed by Mr. Arafat "has not managed to rein in terrorism," he said.

Jordan appeals for peaceful end to crisis

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan Tuesday deplored the "tragic events" currently taking place in the Chechen area and called on the warring parties to resolve their conflict by peaceful means.

An official spokesman said:

"The government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is following up the tragic events in the Chechen area, and the suffering of the innocent people including women, children and the aged."

"Prompted by His Majesty King Hussein's interest in putting an end to the bloodshed and saving the lives of the innocent Muslim civilians, and safeguarding security and stability, the Jordanian government calls upon

the warring parties to exercise self-restraint, avoid the use of arms, and to resort to peaceful dialogue to defuse the crisis and ensure an immediate end to the fighting," the spokesman said.

"The Jordanian government, while voicing its concern over the continued fighting and escalation of the crisis, calls upon all parties to resort to reason and constructive dialogue to reach a just and honourable solution capable of guaranteeing a peaceful life for all parties and ensuring their rights, dignity and future," the spokesman said. "The Jordanian government also calls for containing the crisis so as to limit its negative consequences and prevent it from spreading beyond its present borders."

In Moscow, the government said its troops were pushing to close the southern corridor to prevent Chechens from being able "to retreat to bases set up in the mountains" in the massive Caucasus mountains in the south of the republic.

The ITAR-TASS news agency said Chechen forces had shot down a Russian helicopter northeast of the capital Grozny, killing three people.

Russian Ostankino Television said the helicopter was serving as an ambulance and was downed as it was preparing to land in the north Caucasus region.

Russia said it was closing its borders with Georgia and Azerbaijan to prevent the movement of rebel fighters in Chechnya.

(Continued on page 7)

Unrest continues in Bahrain

NICOSIA (AFP) — Shiite Muslim demonstrators clashed with Bahraini security forces in Manama on Tuesday where machine-gun fire was heard and hundreds of students protested violence which has left up to nine people dead, witnesses said.

The fighting flared despite mass arrests by the security forces aimed at crushing the unrest, which has coincided with a summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the Bahraini capital.

Hundreds of students including veiled women held a rally on the Bahrain University campus at Sakhr "to protest the deaths of four of their Shiite colleagues," a teacher told AFP.

He gave no details of how or when the students died, but said leaflets calling for a classroom boycott and "political and moral reforms" had been distributed.

In Tehran, the leader of the Bahraini opposition called on his countrymen and particularly students to revolt to restore democracy in the Gulf state.

Diplomatic sources in Manama said Tuesday that Bahraini authorities had arrested almost 1,600 people in the capital as well as towns and villages with large Shiite communities in the mainly Sunni Gulf state.

An inhabitant contacted by telephone told AFP that "on Monday evening and Tuesday morning machine-gun shots were heard around Shiite districts in the centre of Manama."

"A large number of special forces in black combat gear were posted around the main Shiite districts of the capital, where sporadic gunfire was heard overnight," he added.

Another witness said clashes had also taken place in the Shiite-dominated villages of Budaiya and Draz, south of Manama.

"Tear gas was used to break up the demonstrators who, armed with iron rods and catapults, chanted anti-government slogans," the witness said.

Burning tyres set alight by demonstrators were scattered along the roads in several areas of Manama and Budaiya, he added.

The banned Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain (IFLB) said in Tehran that weekend clashes left five de-

Qatar lobbies GCC summit for end to Iraq sanctions

BAHRAIN (Agencies) — Qatar tried Tuesday to persuade Gulf Arab leaders meeting in the Bahraini capital to adopt a resolution calling for an end to the international embargo on Iraq, a Qatari official said.

"Kuwait fiercely opposed the Qatari proposal, but Doha did manage to soften the positions of its other partners" in the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), he said.

The leaders of the GCC — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — are holding a three-day summit in Manama that opened on Monday.

The official Qatari News Agency (QNA) said they would adopt a final resolution referring to the "Republic of Iraq" rather than the "Iraqi regime," the term used by some GCC members since Baghdad's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The United Nations imposed crippling sanctions on Baghdad after the invasion.

Iraq formally recognised Kuwait on Nov. 10, a key condition for lifting the embargo, but four days later the U.N. Security Council voted to extend the sanctions for at least another two months.

Unlike other Gulf states, Qatar, restored good relations with Iraq after the invasion and 1991 Gulf war which ousted Iraqi troops from Kuwait.

The Qatari official said Doha also offered to use its good relations with Iraq to "persuade Tehran to accept arbitration by the International Court of Justice to settle its territorial dispute with the UAE."

"Iran has repeatedly insisted it will not cede 'an inch' of the disputed southern Gulf islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tumb and Lesser Tumb which it has held since 1971."

Tehran has rejected a UAE proposal to ask the World Court in the Hague to rule on the dispute.

Iraq on Tuesday rejected as "lies" U.S. accusations that it helped to ship Iraqi oil through Gulf ports, in violation of the international

trade embargo against Baghdad.

Hussein Ghanimi Fard, the director of the National Iranian Oil Company's International Affairs Department, said the "new lies" were in line with "fabricated stories often spread" against the Islamic republic.

"It's an old funny story that doesn't even deserve to be refuted," he told the English-language daily Tehran Times.

On Monday, the specialist weekly Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) quoted the U.S. delegation to the United Nations as accusing Iran of "complicity in the smuggling of Iraqi petroleum through Gulf ports."

In a letter to the U.N. Security Council's Committee on Dec. 7 Washington asked the committee to urge Iran to stop the violations and report back to the U.N. within 30 days on steps taken to comply with the four-year embargo, it said.

Meanwhile the United Nations is checking whether Iraq has developed an extensive biological weapons research programme after inspectors found previously undisclosed germ cultures there for cholera, tuberculosis and the plague, U.N. diplomatic sources said.

The find of 25 litres of "diagnostic media" for the three diseases by a team of U.N. weapons inspectors is the first discovery of materials in over two years that could be part of a banned weapons programme, the sources said.

Although the amount was relatively small, they said the discovery could indicate a wider Iraqi research programme into biological arms than previously thought.

The sources said an analysis was under way to determine their significance, after the bulk of the cultures had been destroyed by U.N. inspectors. Under resolutions by the Security Council such materials needed to be declared.

Without mentioning the discovery, Rolf Ekeus, head of the U.N. special commission in charge of ridding Iraq of dangerous

weapons, said in a report officially released on Monday that his main problem in compiling data for past programmes was in the biological sphere.

"While Iraq maintains that the (biological) programme was in the early research stages and would be defensively oriented, the indications all point to an offensive programme," he said.

He praised Iraq for cooperating in a crucial long-term monitoring programme, but said missing data in several areas was not forthcoming.

"In general, in relation to the past programmes, Iraq has not volunteered information and has shown a marked lack of transparency, disclosing information only when confronted with evidence by the commission," his report said.

"In many instances, new information obtained by the commission contradicted the accounts given by Iraq," he said.

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz meanwhile praised Security Council members which back the lifting of the sanctions imposed on Iraq.

Mr. Aziz "hailed the position adopted by well-intentioned parties in the Security Council towards the suffering of Iraq's children, and their recognition that Iraq has complied with the U.N. resolutions," the state-run agency INA reported.

Although he did not name the countries, Mr. Aziz was probably referring to Russia, China and France, which have called for a gradual lifting of the sanctions despite vehement U.S. and British opposition.

He told a congress of Iraqi emigrants that the United States was "responsible for keeping up the blockade," referring to the oil and trade embargo imposed on Iraq after its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"The United States is hindering all efforts (to lift the sanctions) and inventing false pretexts to justify its iniquitous stance," Mr. Aziz added, branding U.S. policy as "colonialist."

Arafat to reject 'autonomy islands'

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat will reject any Israeli proposal for "islands of autonomy" on the West Bank when he meets Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, a senior Palestinian official said Tuesday.

Mr. Arafat's spokesman, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, said that Mr. Arafat and Mr. Peres in their meeting Wednesday at the Erez crossing between Israel and Gaza would carry on their negotiations embarked in Oslo and Stockholm earlier this month.

They will try to end the stalemate on extending Palestinian autonomy by organising elections to a self-rule council after an Israeli army redeployment on the occupied West Bank.

Under the declaration of principles on autonomy signed in Washington last September, Israeli troops are to pull out of West Bank towns by the eve of elections, which should have been held in July.

But Israel is reluctant to commit itself to a redeployment, out of fear for the security of 120,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank following the killings of 45 Israelis since the launch of self-rule in May.

Faisal Hussein, the leading Palestinian figure in the territory, said the PLO would be willing to consider any Israeli offer of an initial withdrawal from certain towns such as Jenin or Bethlehem.

"We are ready to talk about it if there is a calendar for an overall withdrawal," Mr. Hussein told journalists. But he stressed "there is no question of allowing the creation of islands of autonomy" on the West Bank.

Mr. Hussein said the declaration must be implemented, with the Palestinians insisting that free elections could not be held under Israeli occupation.

Mr. Peres said Monday that Israel "does not intend to change the declaration of principles unilaterally but is wary of carrying out the planned redeployment of its military forces."

The Palestinian self-rule authority headed by Mr. Arafat "has not managed to rein in terrorism," he said.

House panel recommends approval of draft budget, but wants reforms

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Financial Committee of the Lower House of Parliament has recommended that the House endorse the draft budget for 1995 presented by the government provided that the executive authority undertakes to implement key reforms in various sectors, the head of the panel said Tuesday.

Parliament sources said the full House could begin debate of the JD 1.674 billion budget on Saturday, when the Financial Committee would formally present its recommendations to the lawmakers.

Abul Ragheb, an Amman deputy who heads the Financial Committee, said the panel was not suggesting any amendments or additions to the draft, which was presented to the House by Finance Minister Sami Gammo early this month.

In general, Mr. Abul Ragheb said the committee found the JD 50 million deficit budget striking a good balance among the various priorities of the country in

terms of revenues and current and capital expenditures.

But, he said, the panel was demanding that the government implement "wide-ranging and fundamental reforms and measures in almost every sector of life in the country" in return for a passage of the budget without contest.

"If implemented, the more than 60 recommendations would go a long way in improving the overall situation in the country," Mr. Abul Ragheb told the Jordan Times, adding that the suggested measures covered administrative reforms, corrective steps in various sectors, improving the investment climate in the country by eliminating bureaucratic delays, and moves to help reduce unemployment and poverty.

The suggested measures also include additional focus on southern areas, particularly in the context of developing tourism in Aqaba, reforms in land use, help for the agriculture sector and moves designed to raise the standard

of living in the country, he said.

Mr. Abul Ragheb, a former minister of supply and energy, said the lawmakers saw the measures as feasible.

"The government did not deliver fully on promises it made during 1994, but then one can accept that it was busy with the peace process during the year," said the Amman deputy. "But there is no such preoccupation in 1995, and we expect it to start implementing the recommended measures during this year."

Observers expected lawmakers opposed to the Middle East peace process and the Jordan-Israeli peace treaty signed on Oct. 26 to level harsh criticism of the budget when the House begins floor debate on the issue.

"That is one way of taking out their frustration over their failure to block the endorsement of the peace treaty by Parliament," said one observer, referring to the passage of the document through the legislature with a 55-24 vote in early November.

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12:35	Abu Dhabi, Dubai (GF)	06:30	Amsterdam (KL)
14:20	Algiers (AF)	02:00	Athens (OA)
14:25	Karachi, Abu Dhabi (FK)		
15:05	Larnaca (CY)		
15:20	Beirut (ME)		
23:20	Amsterdam (KL)		
23:25	Amsterdam (KL)		

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)			
05:30	Aqaba (RJ)		
09:30	Frankfurt, Berlin (add) (RJ)		
09:30	Rome (RJ)		
10:30	Amsterdam, New York (RJ)		
10:30	Beirut (RJ)		
10:30	Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)		
11:05	Istanbul (RJ)		
19:10	Colombo (RJ)		
19:35	Beirut (RJ)		
20:40	Riyadh (RJ)		
20:45	New Delhi (RJ)		
21:05			

Calcutta, Colombo (add) (RJ)	22:30	Aqaba, Chari (RJ)	22:30
Bangkok (RJ)	22:45	Sanaa (RJ)	22:45

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

07:45	Beirut (ME)		
10:30	Cairo (MS)		
11:30	Sanaa (IV)		
11:30	Jeddah (SV)		
11:45	Rome (AZ)		
13:05	Abu Dhabi (GF)		
15:20	Sharjah (AF)		
17:30	Abu Dhabi, Karachi (FK)		
17:30	Aden (TV)		
22:00	Larnaca (CY)		

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple	700	500
Banana	680	
Bangna (Mukammur)	680	
Cabbage	300	1150
Carrot	280/180	
Caufiflower	440/200	
Champerine	340/200	
Cucumbers (large)	300	280
Cucumbers (small)	600	480
Eggplant	340/220	
Garlic	300/480	
Grape Fruit	420	180
Lezon	280	180
Marrow (large)	250	180
Marrow (small)	300	280
Onion (small)	320/240	
Onion (dry)	300	200
Orange	500/330	
Pepper (hot)	500	300
Pepper (sweet)	300	200
Potato	280	130
Radish	300/200	
Spinach	370/200	
String Beans	900/600	
Tomato	200	230

Cables of support for King

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Higher Education Rabea Al-Sand Tuesday thanked His Majesty King Hussein for his decision to increase the King's allowance.

In a cable to King Hussein, Dr. Sand said he and his ministry staff were deeply grateful for the King's initiative.

The minister said he and his staff will remain loyal to the Hashemite Throne and will continue to perform their duties with dedication to serve the homeland.

The King also received a cable of support from the President of the Jordanian Writers Federation, Diawid Al Rifai, who said he fully supported the King's ideas included in his speech to the 7th Organisation of

Islamic Conference Summit. Mr. Rifai stressed the federation's "support for the historical role of the Hashemites as custodians of the holy places in Jerusalem."

Brigadier Mohammad Abdul Rahman Qudsih, the commander of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) in Jordan, also cabled King Hussein voicing full support for the King's speech before the Casablanca summit.

"Your Majesty's speech reflects wisdom, self-confidence and rare courage in saying what is right," Brig. Qudsih said in his cable.

He added that the King's role and that of the Hashemites and Jordan in caring for the holy places in Jerusalem is well-known to the Arab and Islamic nations.

Princess Alia opens cerebral palsy centre

MADABA (J.T.) — Her Royal Highness Alia Bint Al Hussein Tuesday opened a specialisation clinic in Madaba which would at its initial stage offer services to 70 cerebral palsy patient children. The clinic belongs to the Ibn Cina Cerebral Palsy Society.

Ibrahim Shaqdiq the head of the branch said that his society had been providing medical treatment to around 1,500 patients annually free of charge, but it had lacked a proper centre to provide services to children.

Children with cerebral palsy condition between six months to 12 years will be treated at the centre free of charge, Mr. Shaqdiq noted.

Princess Alia toured parts of the clinic and watched specialists providing services to the children.

Dr. Omar Hamdan, a cerebral palsy specialist, said that the disease is caused by brain injury or maldevelopment in the early years of life. The injury can happen during pregnancy, at delivery or after birth, especially during the critical post natal month, Dr. Hamdan said.

The new Madaba clinic is one of several Cerebral Palsy Foundation (CPF) centres. The CPF currently runs centres in Amman, Zarqa, Irbid, Aqaba, Salt and Karak. Together they care for 7,338 children with cerebral palsy.

Madaba Governor Abdul Qader Hababbeh and Madaba parliament deputies attended the ceremony.

Dr. Bisheh to head Antiquities Department

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The government Tuesday approved Ghazi Bisheh, a leading Jordanian archaeologist, as director of the Department of Antiquities, Dr. Bisheh succeeds Safwan Tell who resigned in July.

Dr. Bisheh takes the post for the second time.

Dr. Bisheh took over the department in November 1988 and served in the post until 1991. The former director, Dr. Tell, is professor of history and archaeology at the University of Jordan.

Dr. Tell was last week honoured by His Majesty King Hussein and Crown Prince Hassan presented him with the Kawakib medal of the second order.

Dr. Bisheh served with the Department of Antiquities for 20 years before being promoted to become its director general in 1988. He also taught Archaeology at the University of Jordan.

Dr. Bisheh obtained his doctorate degree from Michigan University in the U.S. in 1979 and worked for one year at Yarmouk University. He did two seasons of excavation in the Madaba region. He also lectures part time at the American Centre for Oriental Research (ACOR).



Her Majesty Queen Noor chairs the new NHF board of trustees meeting at Raghadan Palace Monday (Photo by Crystal)

NHF gets new board

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF) Monday at Raghadan Palace Monday to welcome new members and to begin a review of the foundation's first decade of achievement and goals for the future.

Her Majesty Queen Noor, who chaired the meeting, thanked the founding members of the board for their dedicated efforts to build and promote NHF's innovative human development strategies and welcomed a new board of trustees, expressing the hope that through them the foundation's initiatives will be strengthened and enhanced.

The Queen spoke of NHF's commitment to balanced, equitable and sustainable development in Jordan and a modernisation process that is balanced with tradition.

"Through appropriate strategies and technologies, our development projects incorporate values and traditions to harness the best of the humanitarian, competitive and creative spirit of our people, and ensure that NHF activities and programmes give support and inspiration to others. Our programmes should promote excellence and the highest standards of quality, effort and commitment," Queen Noor said.

The Queen said: "Our work began by identifying gaps in the development process and specific unmet national needs through extensive research."

The NHF was established in 1985 to consolidate various development efforts to comprehensively address those needs and to initiate model projects that could be replicated in the public and private sectors.

Members of the NHF board expressed pride that the foundation's projects have succeeded as national models, and are considered regional models by international and United Nations Organisations.

Queen Noor urged members of the board to assist the foundation in meeting the real needs of the people of Jordan by promoting a spirit of cooperation and partnership with the government, private sector, NGOs and international organisations.

Members of the new board of trustees include: Mamdouh Abbadi, Inam Al Mufiti, Bassam Al Saket, Mahmoud Al Sharif, Sameeh Darwazeh, Sami Gammouh, Noor Izzedine, Abdul Karim Kabarti, Reema Khalaf, Subhi Ma'ani, Ahmad Mango, Anis Mousasher, Hanna Naddheh, Ali Abu Ragheb, Nawzat Shaker, Leila Sharaf and Khalid Shoman.

Gonzales' visit opens door for greater trade exchange between Jordan and Cuba

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Apart from reaffirming the strong relations between Jordan and Cuba, this week's visit to Jordan by Cuban Foreign Minister Roberto Gonzales also seemed to have opened the door for stepped up economic cooperation between the two countries.

Addressing a press conference marking the end of his four-day visit, Mr. Gonzales said his country wanted to exchange Jordanian phosphates and potash for Cuban sugar. Jordan imports about \$50 million worth of sugar every year from various sources.

Mr. Gonzales said Havana and Amman also saw strong possibilities in developing cooperation in the pharmaceutical industry, another area where Cuba has acquired high reputation, as well as in tourism and agriculture.

On Monday, Mr. Gonzales and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Talal Al Hasan signed an agreement calling for expanded technical and scientific cooperation between Jordan and Cuba. The accord also calls for increased trade and economic relations.

Speaking in Spanish through an Arabic interpreter, Mr. Gonzales said a message he carried from President Fidel Castro to His Majesty King Hussein is an indication of the "strong personal relationship" between the two heads of states and underlined the "historic Cuban support for Arab causes and relations with the Arab World."

"Cuba is looking forward to extending the excellent state of political relationship to economic cooperation," said Mr. Gonzales, in his early thirties and among the youngest of the world's foreign ministers.

Making his points with confidence and emphasis that belied his age, Mr. Gonzales said his socialist-oriented country was committed to introducing wide-sweeping economic reforms to make itself more accessible to world markets and attract foreign investment.

"We are adjusting ourselves to the emerging new world order," he said, adding that the Havana government would only retain control over the education and health sectors while opening up for foreign capital.

Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and Industry and Trade Minister Rima Khalaf also held talks with Mr. Gonzales, who extended an invitation to a Jordanian team of public and private sector representatives to visit Cuba to familiarise themselves with the "opportunities that the country offers."

On the political front, the Cuban minister, who visited Algeria, Tunisia and Libya before arriving in Jordan and left for Egypt, said Havana considered the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty signed on Oct. 26 as the "beginning of a new phase that would lead to comprehensive peace" in the Middle East.

Cuba hopes that the peace process would result in serving the Arab causes which Cuba has always supported, he said, obviously mindful of Havana's relations with Palestinian groups which reject the peace process and the state of deadlock in negotiations between Syria and Israel.

Mr. Gonzales said Cuba saw the autonomy accord signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation (PLO) in September 1993 as the choice of the Palestinian people to determine the course of their future.

Mr. Gonzales criticised the United States, with whom Cuba has been at odds for several decades, for not inviting his country to a recent meeting of all American countries.

He said Cuba, the last holdout among the allies of the former Soviet Union, was a strong believer in bilateral relations based on the principle of respect for each other's views and non-interference in other countries' internal affairs.

"We believe in dialogue and cooperation based on consistent policies and independence of countries," he said. "But the U.S. is against the idea of normalisation of relations" with Cuba.

"We may not agree on one hundred per cent on many issues, but we believe that respect of each other's views despite differences is key to developing relations between countries," he said.

Mr. Gonzales affirmed that Cuba, despite its alienation caused by a continuing American trade embargo and political isolation, was seeking to explain its position to the international community and to "bring more democracy to the United Nations."

He said his current Middle East visit, which came on the heels of visits of European, Asian and Latin American countries, was part of the Cuban effort to make itself felt on the international scene.

Front ends, weather warms

AMMAN (J.T.) — The low pressure and cold air front that affected Jordan in the past few days ends today with temperatures rising but staying well below the average for this time of the year, weatherman Mohammad Bataineh said Tuesday.

Mr. Bataineh noted the weather will continue to be fair and partly cloudy until Saturday evening. He said, however, that it was early to predict whether a low air pressure currently centred over Italy would affect Jordan before that time.

Mr. Bataineh warned of fog formation in the evening and morning periods.

He described the rainy season as excellent and said that all regions of the Kingdom have so far received more than 200 per cent of the average rainfall for this time.

No figures were available Tuesday evening at the department on the amount of rainfall.

However, Minister of Water and Irrigation Saleh Irshaidat told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that the amount of water collected by dams in the Kingdom by Tuesday totalled 71 million cubic metres (mcm) out of a total capacity of 140 mcm.

Dr. Irshaidat said the bulk of the amount was collected by the King Talal Dam, with the volume of water rising to 57 mcm, compared to 52.5 mcm Monday.

The total capacity of the Kingdom's dams is about 15 mcm before the start of the season, is estimated at more than 75 mcm.

Dr. Irshaidat said that the latest snow and rain also raised to eight mcm the level of water in the Wadi Al Arab Dam which has a total capacity of 17 mcm. The water level in Sharhabil Dam rose to 2.3 mcm, 59 per cent of its 3.9 million capacity.

The minister described the rainy season as excellent and said the amount of rainfall in the Kingdom until Tuesday accounted for more than 80 per cent of the average annual rainfall.

He said this would reflect positively on the agricultural season and Jordan's reserves of water.

Dr. Irshaidat said most of the depleted underground water resources would be replenished and the quality of water would improve tangibly.

He said that although the season was excellent, the Kingdom's dams could hold 140 mcm of water, merely 3 per cent of the total rainfall on Jordan. The major part, he said, evaporates, gets lost in other ways or feeds underground water resources.

Dr. Irshaidat said this had prompted the Ministry of Water and Irrigation to draw long-term plans providing for establishing reservoirs and earth dams in various parts of the Kingdom as part of the national water harvest programme.

Dr. Irshaidat, also speaking to Petra, said there were already several dam projects such as Al Karameh Dam which, built once, will have a total capacity of 55 mcm.

The ministry is carrying out a project to increase the capacity of Al Kafrean Dam by 4.6 million cubic metres, he said.

Dr. Irshaidat also said that there was an integrated development project in south Jordan, entailing the establishment of three dams which would have a total capacity of 55 million cubic metres. He said studies on the three dams were in the final stages.

The ministry, said the minister, is also working on building reservoirs and earth dams in valleys in Karak and Mafraq governorates. Some of these dams are currently being constructed and work on the rest will start in 1995, he said.

One day, he promised, the Ministry of Water and Irrigation will be building dams in ravines and gorges because of the rising needs in view of the increase in population.

RSCN warns tree hunters

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — With Christmas just around the corner, the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) is on the look out for would-be Christmas tree hunters and their lethal axes.

The society recently launched a campaign to prevent cutting trees to use for Christmas decoration at homes and other public places. According to Salma Attiyeh, director of finance and public relations at RSCN, more than 10,000 trees are felled in the Kingdom annually and about 200 around Christmas time.

"Cutting trees usually increases around Christmas time and we try to keep an eye on people trying to do this," Ms. Attiyeh told the Jordan Times.

She added that the society monitors six forests, and "we inform the department of afforestation at the Ministry of Agriculture if we see someone trying to cut a tree."

The six forests are: King Hussein's, Queen Noor's, Abdul Hamid Sharaf's, Al Muqabeleen, Al Zab and Al Ballan, all around Amman.

"We have patrols that monitor these forests all year round in an effort to minimise tree cutting," she said.

Ms. Attiyeh urged people to buy plastic trees "instead of destroying the nature."

"Plastic trees are available in the market," she said.

Tree felling fines could reach up to JD 500, according to an official at the Department of Afforestation.

The official told the Jordan Times that there are patrols guarding forests in the Kingdom to deter any attempts at chopping trees.

"We find many people around Christmas time trying to chop trees. We usually transfer them to the courts and they pay a fine," the official said.

According to the official, Queen Alia International Airport Highway is the main target for tree hunters.

"People usually go to the highway because it is long and its lined with pine and cypress trees on both sides."

A confessed 54-year old man who tried to cut a tree during the Christmas season two years ago was caught and fined JD 20 then.

"I went to Baqaa Refugee Camp at 9 p.m. and I cut a tree and put it in the trunk of my car. A few minutes later a patrol in a plain Ministry of Agriculture car stopped and apprehended me," said the man who preferred anonymity.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

FRANCO-ARAB CINEMA FESTIVAL

★ Film entitled "Cheb" (France/Algeria 1991) at Cinema Concorde at 8:30 p.m.

FILMS

★ Children's film (in French) entitled "La Finte a Six Schtroumpfs" at the French Cultural Centre at 10:00 a.m.

★ Film entitled "Christmas Carol" at the British Council at 7:00 p.m.

PIANO RECITAL

Piano recital by Rula Nabil at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

CHRISTMAS DISPLAY

★ Bani Hamida Christmas Display with a variety of small gift items at Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman, First Circle, Rainbow Street.

LECTURES

★ Lecture (in German) entitled "Die Menschwerdung Gottes" by Dr. Werner Wagner at Goethe-Institut at 7:00 p.m.

★ Lecture (in Arabic) entitled "How Do We Overcome Psychological, Mental, and Muscular Tensions" by Dr. Sa'ad Barghouti at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

★ Plastic art exhibition by Laila Kawash at the Royal Cultural Centre.

★ Exhibition of paintings on leather by Iraqi artist Rakan Dabbab at the Phoenix Gallery for Culture and Art.

★ Painting and water colours exhibition by Suhail Ma'touq at Baladina Art Gallery.

★ Art exhibition by Ammar Khammash and Foad Mimi at Instituto Cervantes (the Spanish Cultural Centre).

★ Exhibition of works by Mahmud Obaidi at Darat Al Fuman. Also showing an exhibition of portraits by Fahrelnissa Zeid and the exhibition of contemporary Arab artists.

★ Exhibition of paintings by Ismail and Tamam Shammout at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation.

★ Exhibition of paintings by Sadik Krawish at the French Cultural Centre.

★ Exhibition by artists Latif Al Khateeb and Muly Khaleefa at the Housing Bank Gallery.

Government approves \$10.9m grant for cancer centre

AMMAN (Petra) — The Cabinet on Tuesday approved a \$10.9 million grant from the Netherlands to finance the Amal Cancer Centre currently being built near the University of Jordan Hospital.

The grant represents 45 per cent of the total cost of building and equipping the centre.

The overall cost of the project was estimated at JD 17 million and the first-year's operational cost at JD 4 million.

The Cabinet approved the June 1992 earth summit charter which calls for the creation of national and regional programmes aimed at fighting desertification.

The Cabinet authorised Jordan's U.N. Ambassador Adnan Abu Odeh to sign the charter on behalf of Jordan.

At its regular session yesterday the Cabinet also decided to raise to 15 per cent from 10 per cent the advance payment to contractors executing government projects. The decision includes the contractors who at the moment are building 30 schools financed through a JD 15.5 million Japanese loan.

The Cabinet also approved the issuance of a licence to Sultan Al Hattab, a columnist writer in Al Rai daily, to issue a weekly magazine under the title of Al Uruba and granted Dal Al Sabeel publishing house a licence to issue Al Sabeel weekly by Mr. Hamzeh Mansour, a member of Parliament and the Islamic Action Front. The licence was issued in 1993 to Hilmi Al Asmar, who, at the moment, is the Al Sabeel's chief editor.

The Cabinet also appointed Mohammad Saeed Abu Nowar as Jordan's ambassador to Switzerland and pensioned Ambassador Fahd Taweel.

Na'im wins Goethe award

AMMAN (Petra) — The Goethe Institute of Amman Tuesday announced that a Jordanian will for the first time win the Goethe golden medal.

Institute director Dieter Glade announced at a press conference that this year's medal will be awarded to Dr. Laila Na'im in appreciation of intellectual, cultural and social works in Jordan and Germany.

Dr. Glade said Dr. Na'im is the fourth Arab but first Arab woman to win the medal. He said three Egyptian researchers had won the award in the past.

Dr. Na'im, who will receive the medal in the German city of Weimar, Goethe's hometown, voiced joy over winning the award and expressed hope that honouring her would constitute moral support for Arab writers.

CORRECTION

IN A story entitled "Boiler explosion rocks chocolate factory" that appeared in yesterday's Jordan Times, the name and location of the factory were incorrectly stated. The correct name of the factory is Jordan Venus Factories Company and it is located near Marka Airport. Further, the owner of the factory, Rawan Siwady, tells us that the real cause of the explosion is still unknown and not as a Civil Defence official cited as "negligence in maintaining the boiler." The factory was not totally ruined and is now operating as usual. Ms. Siwady said.

Lacking rhetoric, abundant insight

By Ian Atalla
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — In the Arab World's professional circle of artists and literati, where verbal eloquence in expressing one's ideas and inspirations is such a prominent trademark of its members, Leila Kawash is a glaring exception.

The minutely crafted and detailed canvases of this Iraqi artist speak of long hours of care and effort — effort which this year earned her a place along with 70 other women artists from the Middle East in "Forces of Change," an international exhibit which was held in Washington, D.C. last February.

But ask her to expound on the meaning of any one of her works now on display at the Royal Cultural Centre (RCC), or how she conceived it, and, unlike so many of her well-polished peers, she is simply unable to articulate it. Or, at best, she can offer a few helpful but nonetheless fragmented recollections.

Nor is she able to convey any profound reason that drove her towards art: "I just always loved to paint and draw, ever since I was little," she says. "And so, I always wanted to be an artist."

There was one incident which occurred while Ms. Kawash was leading the Jordan Times through an impromptu tour of her work at the RCC. She had wanted to point out a newspaper clipping she had placed in the midst of one of her more recently done canvases, a swirling collage of paper and paint, but was unable to locate it.

"It appears it got covered up underneath the paintstrokes as I was completing the collage," she said apologetically.

Chaos? Messiness? Or a refreshing lack of affectation instead? Many of today's artists describe to critics how extensively random and unthought-out their works are. The apparent apology for lack of cognisance about what they are doing, however, sometimes seems suspiciously placed — as if the speaker is attempting to demonstrate in a sort of subliminal way that his/her work has somehow been touched by some holy hand.

But in Ms. Kawash's case, she had stumbled into letting her cat out of the bag without even having had the foresight or wiles to intentionally contrive it in the first place — unwittingly proving, as it were, without any realisation even, what others put so much effort into laying claim to.

One work was a painting/collage of four young village girls, peering out of their abayas amidst the surrounding lacework of pillars, arabesques and calligraphic patterns, so typical of much of the work on display.

Ms. Kawash says she was struck by a photograph of these same girls one day: "I saw their round little eyes, their seriousness before its time, and I wanted to capture that look." She cannot, however, remember from what particular country the youngsters are from — "Sudan, perhaps," she ventures.

What is the painting about? Beauty and innocence, or pain and despair? Ms. Kawash evidently feels more of the latter.

"At first I thought how cute they looked," she says. "But later on it became more serious. I felt as if they were crying out."

However, the work is ambiguously serene enough that the artist has been able to use it on the cover of a Christmas card edition which she has published.

Then, there is a collage inspired by an antique copy of the Holy Koran from Yemen. "The stains on the paper of the pages" caught Ms. Kawash's eye at first. "They were very pretty... but later on, I came to feel that they were somehow made of blood."

The painting is just as free form as the thoughts which launched it, and is just as unsettling on closer inspection. The random, unaffected and self-conscious frame of mind with which Ms. Kawash appears to approach her artwork, it seems, can unlock and open some unexpected doors.

The exhibit at the RCC, which opened on Dec. 17 under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Wijdan Ali, runs until

Bhutto sacks law minister

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has sacked Law Minister Iqbal Haider after accusing him of mishandling a multi-million dollar scandal involving several top opposition leaders, press reports said Tuesday.

An official statement said that Ms. Bhutto expressed dismay at the minister's performance during a cabinet meeting she chaired late Monday and asked for his resignation, the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) reported.

But newspapers Tuesday maintained the real reason for the sacking was because the minister mishandled a case which allowed a jailed firebrand opposition MP Sheikh Rashid win a court order allowing him back in parliament.

Mr. Rashid and several other opposition MPs were arrested two months ago on various charges, including possession of unlicensed weapons and involvement in murder cases.

Both the chairman of the Senate and Speaker of the Lower House ruled that until the deputies had been convicted by a court they should be allowed to attend parliamentary sessions.

But the rulings were ignored and the MPs were kept in jail leading to opposition claims that their cases were politically motivated. Mr. Haider insisted that the detained MPs should seek release orders from the court. They did so and Mr. Rashid and some others won their cases.

Ms. Bhutto was furious with Mr. Haider and reprimanded him for mishandling the issue, the independent daily The Nation said. It said the law minister had now been made a "scapegoat" in the affair.

Ms. Bhutto also blamed Mr. Haider for not having properly prepared the state's case against people involved in a scandal known as the "cooperatives scam," official sources said.

A court has released some of the accused on bail. The cooperatives scandal was uncovered in early 1992 — when former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was in power — after tens of thousands of depositors lost about 20 billion rupees (\$750 million).

They had put money in 300 cooperative societies, attracted by offers of high interest rates. The societies were owned by influential people in Pakistan.

Names of top leaders were mentioned in connection with the scam. Ms. Bhutto, who was then opposition leader, alleged that the Ittefaq Foundation owned by Mr. Sharif's family had benefited. But a judicial commission appointed by Mr. Sharif exonerated the family industry.

When she came to power last year Ms. Bhutto pledged a full investigation into the scandal.

Mr. Sharif's father, who is chairman of Ittefaq Foundation, was arrested along with former Interior Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain. But to the deep embarrassment of the government, the courts granted them bail. Mr. Sharif's father is accused of financial irregularities, including tax evasion.

Meanwhile, Karachi's transport system ground to a halt Tuesday as operators protested unrest here, which claimed five more lives overnight, and threatened to go on an indefinite strike if the violence was not contained.

The protest followed a transporters' strike Sunday, which coincided with a similar call by a religious party, resulting in more than a dozen fatalities in a day of shooting in this port city.

Attendance was low at offices across the city as public transport shut down. A spokesman from one transporters' group said 60 vehicles had been gutted in one week of unrest and demanded compensation and protection from the government.

Late Monday, one girl was shot dead during relatively low-intensity violence in various parts of the city. Her relatives claimed she was shot by police and paramilitary troops.

The incident followed Sunday's clash between police and residents of a predominantly Shiite district, where victims of the shooting claimed they were fired upon by paramilitary Rangers.

One policeman was also killed Monday in the Korangi industrial area while three others were killed in random incidents.



Western journalists file a last report using a satellite telephone from the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) base in Grozny before packing up and leaving the city. Most foreign journalists have left the Chechen capital following warnings from the Russian government that Grozny would be bombarded unless the Chechens had laid down their arms (AFP photo)

The nightmare of Grozny

GROZNY, Russia (AFP) — Pula Magamyedova stands weeping in the snow, still wearing her slippers and dressing gown, after Russian planes reduced her home to a pile of rubble.

For the inhabitants of this rebel Caucasus capital, bombed five times overnight in an apparent terror campaign by Moscow, the nightmare has only begun.

"I am on my own and haven't got anywhere to go. My four engineers were killed in the explosion," the frail 68-year-old woman told AFP, her eyes brimming with tears.

Russian authorities have said they bombed only legitimate strategic targets in their bid to bring the breakaway Chechen Republic to heel. But of the five Russian bombs which fell in the heart of Grozny, none hit strategic targets.

The bridge across the river Sura, 300 metres from the presidential palace of independence leader Dzhokhar Dudayev, was missed although three bombs exploded within 40 metres.

Everything in the immediate vicinity is charred. Not a single window is intact at the Petrochemical Institute, more than 200 metres away, where bomb fragments hit its ninth floor.

Five hundred metres further on, 20 houses have been

damaged and five reduced to ruins.

In a radius of 300 metres there is nothing but rubble and an enormous crater. Some bombs left holes more than four metres (12 feet) deep.

There is a smell of gas everywhere and three jets are still burning from a ruptured pipeline. "The terrified children ran out into the night with almost nothing on. The women were shouting, the children crying," said Russian Ismailov, who lives in the area.

"It's us, the inhabitants of this town, who are their 'strategic targets'," Nadejda Odinsova says, as artillery fire is heard coming over nearer.

Since Monday evening, she has taken refuge in an anti-air raid shelter.

There are still a dozen women, children and old men among the boxes and blankets in the shelter. They are afraid to go out and rely on others to bring in food and other essential supplies.

"There are 100,000 Russians left in the town and they don't give a damn. We haven't got anywhere else to go," Lyudmila Bessarabova says, hugging her frightened eight-year-old daughter against her.

For the past year she has not been paid her monthly salary and the Russian state

owes her millions of rubles. She has no money at all and so family outside Grozny, she says.

"It is worse than in 1942, even the German planes did not bomb us like this," said one angry old man. "They are fascists of the first order. They are finally showing their true colours to the entire world," adds his neighbour, Magomed Astramirov, a man of 70.

"What have we taken from them that is so important that they should react with such savagery?" he asks. The men are worked up into a fury over the carnage of civilians, Russian President Boris Yeltsin, the pilots of the planes, whose names they say they will find out, and the whole world for not taking "little Chechnya" seriously.

In Grozny's main hospital, surgeon Boris Kadero is angry, too, as he goes from ward to ward showing reporters the injured.

He had to carry out several amputations and has very little resources to look after his patients. The rooms are cold, each heated only by one tiny electric radiator.

Tanya Titov burst into tears. Her mother is critically injured. She covered her daughter with her body to protect her on Sunday night when the Russian planes bombed their homes near the television tower.

Polish, Belarussian border guards exchange shots

WARSAW (R) — Polish and Belarussian Border Guards exchanged shots at the weekend while chasing immigrants and one Belarussian soldier was wounded, a Polish spokesman said Tuesday.

The Border Guard spokesman said in a statement that a Belarussian patrol had crossed into Poland at around midnight Sunday in contravention of agreements between the two countries.

Belarussian authorities in Grodno had alerted their Polish counterparts that some people were crossing into the area of Poland's densely forested Bialowieza National

Park southeast of Bialystok.

"About 200 metres from the frontier a Polish guard patrol moving to halt a group of persons crossing the border was fired on by them with a machinegun," the spokesman said. The patrol leader fired back.

It turned out that the shots had come from four Belarussian soldiers who admitted crossing the frontier in pursuit of their quarry, added the statement to the Polish News Agency (PAP).

Polish troops later detained 24 Somalis, 14 Sri Lankans and seven Bangladeshis, he said.

Ingush leader says Moscow may punish his people

NAZARAN, Russia (R) — The leader of the small ethnic Republic of Ingushetia said the Kremlin might try to punish his region after its residents tried to stop the advance of Russian troops to neighbouring Chechnya.

Russian Aushev, speaking to reporters in his capital Nazran, also said Russia's approach to the Chechnya crisis meant it was heading once again towards becoming a police state.

"Since Dec. 11, Moscow has considered us to be the allies of Chechnya," he said. "We are expecting a negative reaction from Russia. Our borders will be shut. There will be provocations."

At least five Ingushs were killed on Dec. 11 when Russian troops, sent to end Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev's three-year rebellion against Moscow, shelled a village where residents tried to stop their advance.

Last Saturday, six days after the operation began, Russian troops opened fire with warning on three cars carrying Chechen refugees through a checkpoint on the Ingush border.

Nine people were killed and a senior Russian officer has acknowledged that the armed forces were in the wrong.

"I have told the prosecutor general to open criminal proceedings into this case."

Aushev said. "The servicemen were drunk. We found syringes with traces of drugs on the scene."

The Russian troops cleared away the evidence quickly and by Sunday afternoon, only a few shards of glass and a discarded car battery marked the scene.

Mr. Aushev said Russian troops were merciless in their dealings with the local population.

"All the Russian armed formations stationed here evidently have instructions to apply brutal pressure on the population," he said.

Mr. Aushev, an army general, fought in the Soviet Union's 10-year Afghan campaign — as did Gen. Dudayev and Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev.

He said the Russian military operations signalled a dramatic change in Moscow's post-Soviet domestic policies.

"We think we are now seeing the first signs that the country is moving towards totalitarianism," he said. "If a state cannot solve its problems through talks and has to use force, it is doomed."

Mr. Aushev ruled out proclaiming Ingushetia independent.

Mr. Aushev, elected president in February, said he was discussing with other regional leaders.

Mexico rebels defy Chiapas truce

GUADALUPE TEPEYAC, Mexico (R) — Rebels in the southern state of Chiapas launched widespread troop movements and civil actions that threatened to explode into violence.

The Zapatista National Liberation Army said in a news conference that thousands of its rebel troops had slipped from their jungle strongholds into army-occupied territory and were peacefully occupying areas around 38 municipalities.

Chiapas officials confirmed that eight highway blockades had been thrown up around the state by peasant groups, but stopped short of saying the groups were Zapatistas. They also said the rebels' claims of widespread occupations were false.

An armed group of peasants moved into the town of Simojovel 50 kilometres north of San Cristobal de Las Casas and set fire to the town hall, witnesses and government officials said.

In San Cristobal, Catholic Bishop Samuel Ruiz began a hunger strike aimed at preventing fighting, but said in a statement that Monday's events "showed our state and our country sliding down the slope to war and irreversible violence."

Rebel leader Subcomandante Marcos told reporters in this rebel-held town that even though thousands of his troops had broken through the military cordons surrounding their positions, they intended to observe a ceasefire that began on Jan. 12.

"Our units infiltrated themselves through the enemy lines with the aim of avoiding armed clashes... there were no clashes in strict compliance with the ceasefire which is being maintained

with regard to these troops," Comm. Marcos said.

The rebels rose up in arms in Chiapas last Jan. 1 to press for deep-rooted political and social changes in the state, which is one of Mexico's poorest.

They retreated to the jungle after 11 days of fighting, but emerged Monday — nearly one year later — telling sympathetic residents of the occupied municipalities they were digging in "to resist possible government attack."

A large swath of eastern Chiapas has been under Zapatista control in an uneasy peace that has held since the ceasefire began. But the army had slowly surrounded the rebels and, by Comm. Marcos' own admission, was in a position to crush them militarily.

Chiapas Interior Minister Eracila Zepeda, in an interview with television news programme Ecu, described the actions as only "a peaceful movement" more political than military.

"It would be a gigantic

error to think that this is the beginning of a conflagration," he said.

At the same time, government officials in Mexico City moved quickly to play down the events in Chiapas, saying only 665 people were involved in the blockades and another 120 — 20 of them armed — in the taking of Simojovel.

"Without doubt, this is not Jan. 1," said a government spokesman, referring to the New Year's Day uprising by the Zapatistas in which they took over several Chiapas towns and touched off fighting in which at least 145 people died.

Officials in several Chiapas towns said to be occupied reported no violence. They told Reuters the rebels had put up nearby roadblocks, but there were no further signs of trouble.

A military commander in the conflict zone told Reuters he had no authorisation to fight the rebels if shooting started.

Comm. Marcos told reporters the Zapatistas, who launched their rebellion in the name of greater democracy and indigenous rights, rejected a peace initiative from President Ernesto Zedillo who proposed last week the formation of a multi-party congressional commission to negotiate an end to the Chiapas conflict.

Comm. Marcos said conditions for talks included the resignation of ruling party Chiapas Governor Eduardo Robledo, whom the rebels say won election in August through fraud, and the creation of a peace commission led by Bishop Ruiz. Comm. Marcos said shortly after Mr. Robledo took office on Dec. 1 that renewed fighting was "imminent."

Forces head for Chiapas

SEVERAL hundred Mexican government troops were headed Tuesday towards the Chiapas town of Simojovel which has been occupied by armed peasants thought to be linked to Zapatista rebels, a Reuters witness said.

A Reuters reporter said the column of about 30 vehicles included trucks, two light tanks, an ambulance and jeeps mounted with heavy machine guns.

Amnesty sees no improvement in Burma

BANGKOK (AFP) — Amnesty International, renewing its call for the immediate release of all prisoners of conscience in Burma, has said it sees no significant improvement in the human rights situation in that country.

In a 24-page report received here Tuesday, the London-based human rights monitor said there had been "no fundamental change in (Burma's) attitude towards respecting the basic human rights of its citizens."

It expressed concern that "certain well-publicised events," such as opposition leader Aung San Sun Kyi's meetings with a U.S. congressman and members of the ruling junta, "should not draw attention away from ongoing human rights violations."

It referred to serious health problems among detainees as well as incidents of ill treatment by authorities.

The report asked that all prisoners of conscience be immediately released, a full list of detainees be published and that proper medical attention be provided to all prisoners.

It also called for commutation of death sentences, release to civilian life of military to work as unpaid laborers or porters and granting of full and free access to

international human rights and humanitarian bodies.

"Whereas the SLORC took a number of tentative steps to indicate to the international community a willingness to address the human rights situation in Myanmar, it at the same time reinforced its repressive hold within the country," Amnesty International said.

Myanmar is the official name of Burma. The ruling junta is known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC).

The report acknowledged the officially reported release of more than 2,000 political prisoners since 1992, but stated that political detention "continues to be a major tool of repression used by the SLORC."

Hundreds of political prisoners arrested since the pro-democracy movement began in 1988, including 28 members of the 1990 parliament-elect which was never seated, remained in detention, it recalled.

At least 60 students and perhaps as many as 200 were arrested at December 1991 demonstrations seeking the release of Aung San Sun Kyi. Forty-six were known to have been given jail terms ranging between six and 20 years.

"The SLORC continues to intimidate its citizens and discourage them from exercising their fundamental rights to

freedom of expression and assembly by arresting anyone involved in political opposition activities," the report said.

Regarding Aung San Sun Kyi, now in her sixth year of house arrest, the group said it was concerned her widely publicised meetings with junta leaders "may be simply an attempt by the SLORC to gain international respectability."

Ethnic minorities continue to suffer from human rights violations, in the context of both the junta's operations against armed opposition groups and its work on large construction projects.

"Such human rights violations include extrajudicial killings, torture and ill-treatment, forced porter duty for the (army), forced unpaid labour on construction projects, and forced relocation of villages," the report said.

It accused Rangoon's ongoing national convention to draft a new constitution of tailoring provisions to exclude the possibility of Aung San Sun Kyi becoming president. Delegates were not allowed to discuss provisions freely, it added.

Amnesty International also noted reports that solidarity groups formed nationwide were merely a front for the SLORC, and that participation was "not spontaneous."

Aquino daughter, lover declare their love

MANILA (AFP) — The unwed daughter of former President Corason Aquino, Kris Aquino, 23, and her live-in lover, movie star Philip Salvador, 45, declared their love for each other in a television show aired here. But the two did not make any direct references to Kris Aquino being three-months pregnant by Salvador, who is married to another woman who has given him three children. The two made the declaration before a panel of showbiz columnists in Kris Aquino's weekly television gossip show, called "Actually..." it was their first public appearance together since her pregnancy grabbed headlines throughout the nation last week. Although the show dealt mostly with Salvador's movie plans, when asked about his love life, Salvador said, "We all know this, I love Kris." The youngest Aquino daughter replied, "Of course, the feeling is very much mutual." However, the two of them insisted that the talk should focus on Salvador's movie career and not on their relationship. "We are both trying to put our lives in order," Kris Aquino said. When asked about what had changed for him this year, Salvador said he realised "how sweet it is to love and be loved by the one you love." When Salvador was asked about what Christmas gift he would give Kris Aquino, she interjected. "He has already given me the best gift I could possibly ask for," although she did not elaborate. The two became a couple when they co-starred in a movie together earlier this year. Former President Aquino, a devout Roman Catholic, strongly disapproves of her daughter's relationship with Salvador and has cut off all contact to her once-favourite child.

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New York offers toys for guns

NEW YORK (AFP) — New York authorities launched Monday their second Christmas "Toys For Guns" drive, hoping to curb the number of guns on the streets of the U.S. metropolis during the holiday season. Gun owners have until Dec. 25 to turn in their weapons at various police stations in the city and receive a \$100 gift certificate that can be used to purchase toys, watches, clothes or food. Some 3,200 guns were turned in last year's campaign, which New York police decided to extend it until Jan. 6 because of its success. The New York campaign has prompted several other U.S. cities to follow suit and offer gifts at Christmas to gun owners who relinquish their arms.

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Bored after exams, schoolboy robs bank

LONDON (R) — A British schoolboy, bored with waiting for his examination results, robbed his neighbourhood bank to pass the time. Newspapers reported Tuesday that Jamie Insole, 18, was sentenced to eight years in prison for robbery and would not be able to take up his place at the University of Wales, earned by his examination success. He dressed up in combat gear and armed himself with an imitation World War II pistol before robbing a bank near his home in Cardiff, South Wales in July. He was arrested after being tackled by two passers-by, the court in Cardiff heard at Monday's hearing. "He has only a tenuous grip on reality and was going through an emotional crisis about his future," defence counsel told the court.

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Disgruntled Japanese makes 3,000 calls to dentist

TOKYO (R) — Japanese police have arrested a 22-year-old unemployed man who made 3,000 harassing telephone calls to his dentist over a one-month period because he was dissatisfied with treatment of a decayed tooth. A police spokesman said Tuesday that Nobuyuki Takei, during which he got the dentist on the line and then remained silent, on Nov. 14 after treatment last May. "The dentist has ignored my complaint that his treatment caused serious damage to my health," the spokesman quoted Takei as telling police after he was arrested Monday.

N. Korea, U.S. end fruitless talks on downed pilot

SEOUL (R) — North Korean and U.S. military officers held a fruitless border meeting Tuesday to discuss the return of an airman captured after his U.S. army helicopter was downed in North Korea.

During the 35-minute meeting at the hamlet of Panmunjom, the North Koreans refused to discuss details of the incident or the pilot's possible repatriation, a U.S. military spokesman in Seoul said.

"Our side asked for a prompt return of the helicopter and its crew," the spokesman said.

"The North Koreans withheld any immediate response and said information concerning the incident will be made available once an investigation is over," he said.

He said the two sides were expected to meet again "soon" to discuss repatriation of the pilot and other issues related to the helicopter downing.

Tuesday's talks, attended by two middle-level officers from each side, were the first formal discussions of the incident between the two sides.

U.S. Congressman Bill Richardson has been in Pyongyang negotiating for the release of the crewmen on behalf of President Bill Clinton. He was scheduled to meet North Korean government officials Tuesday.

North Korean officers Monday rejected a U.S. request to begin talks on the border, saying their leadership still had to complete investigation into the incident.

South Korea's Yonhap News Agency quoted a North Korean diplomat at the United Nations as saying Pyongyang would release the pilot if the incident stemmed from a navigation error, as Washington says.

"Isn't it natural to return the pilot if it is confirmed (the helicopter) entered the air-

space because of a deviation from the flight route?" the diplomat was quoted as saying.

North Korea said it shot down the South Korea-based helicopter over its territory, killing Chief Warrant Officer David Hilemon and capturing Bobby Hall. The Pentagon says it has not been able to confirm whether the craft was shot down or made an emergency landing.

A U.S. defence official said the OH-58 reconnaissance helicopter had mistakenly sped low over the Korean border Saturday and the crew thought they were shot in South Korea minutes before they went down.

In response, the Pentagon announced immediate flight restrictions on all U.S. helicopter flights near the Korean border and said broad investigations of helicopter training and navigation aids had been ordered.

Yonhap quoted the North Korean diplomat as saying North Korean forces shot down the helicopter after the crew ignored warning shots.

"The helicopter was downed by one shot as it did not land, turned southward and tried to cross the military demarcation line (border)," the diplomat was quoted as saying.

"This is a question of the (North Korean) People's Army's defence."

A Pentagon spokesman said he had no information on whether warning shots were fired and if so, how the pilots reacted.

The United States has demanded North Korea turn over the crewmen. Mr. Clinton said Monday that Mr. Richardson, a New Mexico Democrat who arrived in Pyongyang on a previously scheduled trip just after the incident, was "doing a very fine job" representing America's interests in the matter.

"It's a high priority. We're working on it and we are



going to do our best to resolve it," the president said in response to questions during a White House budget briefing.

Stu Nagurka, a spokesman in Washington for Mr. Richardson, said he spoke to him by telephone about 1700 GMT Monday.

"He said that discussions are continuing with a full series of sessions set for Tuesday," Mr. Nagurka said.

The incident has threatened to disrupt a U.S. agreement with the Socialist North under which Pyongyang agreed to suspend its nuclear programme in return for Western aid for non-threatening nuclear technology and improved relations with Washington.

State Department spokesman Mike McCurry said U.S. ambassador-at-large Robert Gallucci, who negotiated the pact, had sent a message to his North Korean counterpart, First Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok-Ju, urging the return of the surviving pilot and the body of the other crewman.

Mr. McCurry said there had been no explicit threat to hold up the nuclear deal over the incident. Washington is due to deliver oil to North Korea in the next few weeks to compensate it for energy lost from its shut-down nuclear reactor.

A senior State Department official, who asked not to be identified, said the United States had not "directly drawn any linkage" to the accord, but added: "Perhaps the North Koreans will subliminally get the message."

Carter announces ceasefire in Bosnia from Dec. 23

PALE, Bosnia (R) — U.S. mediator Jimmy Carter said Bosnia Serbs agreed Tuesday to begin a ceasefire throughout Bosnia from Dec. 23.

Mr. Carter, who met Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and army commander General Ratko Mladic in Pale, said the ceasefire would be monitored by U.N. peacekeepers and extend to the Muslim enclave of Bihac in northwest Bosnia which is under Serb attack.

Mr. Karadzic said Gen. Mladic watched as Mr. Carter told reporters: "The most significant achievement this morning was the Bosnian Serb leaders... agreed to a complete ceasefire throughout Bosnia... to be implemented... on Dec. 23."

He said it would be "monitored by U.N. forces along all lines of confrontation, by a cessation of all hostile activities."

Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic told Mr. Carter earlier that government forces would accept an immediate ceasefire for four months.

Mr. Carter believed he had agreed a ceasefire with Mr. Karadzic in nine hours of talks Monday. He returned to Pale when Mr. Karadzic said on CNN television later that he agreed only to explore the possibility of a ceasefire.

Mr. Izetbegovic told reporters he agreed with Mr. Carter to accept a four-month ceasefire at once and negotiations "based on (Serb) acceptance of a (big power) contact group peace plan as the starting point."

The Bosnian government

signed the peace plan last summer when it was presented on a "take it or leave it" basis which the Bosnian Serbs rejected.

The plan would give 51 per cent of Bosnia to a federation of Muslims and Croats and the rest of Serbs who now control 70 per cent of the former Yugoslav republic.

While Mr. Karadzic has signalled he is ready to start talks about a settlement on the basis of the plan, he made clear the Serbs want to rewrite it extensively to take account of their territorial, economic and security demands.

Bosnian Vice-President Ejup Ganic said he warned Mr. Carter that the Serbs wanted to wreck the peace plan and added:

"Our major concern was that we start with this plan and build on it. We understand that Karadzic wants to start with the peace plan and then to destroy it. Maybe some changes are possible later on by mutual adjustments, by mutual agreements."

Fears that Mr. Carter might undermine the plan with his private diplomacy have been central to fears among some of the big power peace group — the United States, Russian, Britain, France and Germany — about the outcome of his mission.

The Bosnian government was also worried about the propaganda effect of his visit to former Yugoslavia at Mr. Karadzic's invitation.

Mr. Carter was rebuked by the White House for telling the Bosnian Serbs their cause

was misunderstood in the outside world when it blamed them for aggression.

"The Serbs definitely scored by having him there," Mr. Ganic said.

Bosnia's Muslims have sustained most of the 200,000 dead in the war and have been driven from their homes across wide swathes of eastern and northern Bosnia.

Mr. Karadzic said he wanted to trade the remaining Muslim enclaves surrounded by Serbs in eastern Bosnia — Srebrenica, Gorazde and Zepa — for Serb possessions he no longer wants elsewhere in the country.

Muslims were a majority in eastern Bosnia when the war started in response to Bosnia's declaration of independence which was opposed by Serbs, a third of the population.

Mr. Carter emerged from his first round of talks with Mr. Karadzic confident that he had forged a ground-breaking agreement that had eluded official mediators, including a ceasefire offer.

He was quickly contradicted by Mr. Karadzic who told CNN television the ceasefire was only a possibility to be explored.

"Generally speaking, we have told the Muslims we don't want any more cease-fires, we want an end to the war and no breaks for them to recover," Mr. Karadzic said.

"We can't stop our military activities until we get an agreement on the cessation of hostilities," he added.

Mr. Carter was expected to travel to Belgrade later in the day to meet Serbian Presi-

dent Slobodan Milosevic supports the peace plan has renounced his former Bosnian Serb allies.

Meanwhile fifty people were wounded in the village of Klokot in the northwestern Bihać enclave in rocket explosions Monday, Bosnia reported.

The radio said the Bosnian Serbs fired two rockets at the village east of Bihać where the water reservoir supplying the town is located. Thirty of the 50 casualties were severely wounded, the village was almost completely destroyed, the radio said.

Major Koos Sol, a spokesman for the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR), said several rockets exploded in the town but we still don't know what it was exactly. Maj. Sol said.

Another UNPROFOR spokesman, Michael Williams, said several rockets had hit Klokot. The UN could not confirm the number of casualties.

Bosnian radio said some 500 people had been killed in the last six weeks of the offensive on Bihać pocket, including 160 children. A further 160 were wounded.

Michael Williams said that four tank shells, one 120mm mortar shell hit Bihać town, the other of a 80-square-kilometre U.N. declared safe area which the Serb attackers advanced.

Mr. Williams said it was as yet no indication if the evening as to how many lives the bombardment claimed.

Kohl flirts with Greens but sticks to FDP

BONN (R) — Chancellor Helmut Kohl Tuesday praised the once-radical Greens, a party he decried as dangerous only months ago.

In the latest sign of shifting patterns in German politics, the Christian Democrat (CDU) leader told the popular Bild daily he shared some of the Greens' basic values and saw no reason to treat their deputies as enemies.

Mr. Kohl's comments on the Greens were his kindest yet since the October general election set off a slow realignment of forces in Germany's coalition-oriented politics.

"Some Greens have a vision that I like," Mr. Kohl said of the Bonn party most openly opposed to NATO and nuclear energy.

"As a man of conservative values, I stand on the side of those who say our generation does not have the right to exploit the environment to the detriment of our children and grandchildren," he told Bild.

Mr. Kohl ruled out any link with the Greens in Bonn and did not see his hard-pressed Free Democrat (FDP) allies collapsing and

endangering his coalition. He said: "It's absolute nonsense to call for the pallbearers."

But his furtive glances to the left, published under the headline "What I like about the Greens," attracted more attention in Bonn.

The October vote left Mr. Kohl with only a 10-seat majority and put the spotlight on three small parties in parliament.

The small Free Democrat (FDP) party, his coalition allies since 1982, lost heavily while the Greens advanced and East Germany's reform communist PDS beat the odds to return.

Fearing the FDP's decline could continue, the conservative CDU has suddenly discovered the Greens have matured since their early flower-power days and could be future partners.

Feeling snubbed, some FDP leaders turned around and found good things to say about the opposition Social Democrats (SPD).

Caught in the middle, the SPD has started criticising the Greens, a party many members still consider a "natural ally," and edging

closer to Mr. Kohl on economic and foreign policy.

East German Social Democrats, in a trend frowned on by the national party, have started moving cautiously to work more with the reform communist Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS).

"I have no problem treating the Greens normally and not making this a 'friend-versus-foe' relationship," Mr. Kohl said.

He even admitted to applauding some speeches by Green deputies, an act of symbolic aisle-crossing unheard of when Mr. Kohl's majority was 134 seats strong and the political fault lines were clearly drawn.

Excited talk in the media about a possible "black-green" coalition, as a CDU-Green link is called in Bonn's political jargon, seems to have helped both parties in opinion polls.

ZDF Television's monthly pollbarometer poll, by the electoral research group, said last week that both CDU and Greens advanced a point while SPD and FDP fell by one each.

Speculation about Mr. Kohl's coalition has also heated up in Bonn because of a raucous FDP congress last week.

The luckless FDP leader Klaus Kinkel, who is also Mr. Kohl's foreign minister, almost quit in desperation at the party's embarrassing losses during the 1994 voting marathon.

The FDP, which failed to win the necessary five per cent in nine polls before clearing the hurdle in the general election, faces two make-or-break state votes next year. Defeat could prompt the party to pull out of government.

All this movement in Bonn has upset the CDU's Bavarian sister party, the conservative Christian Social Union (CSU), which has stopped its usual FDP-bashing to warn Mr. Kohl against considering any link with the Greens.

"The CSU and Greens are like fire and water, there is no path that can lead us together," CSU Secretary General Erwin Huber told the magazine Der Spiegel this week.

Mandela rebuffed in bid to shape ANC ruling body

BLOEMFONTEIN, South Africa (AFP) — Members of the African National Congress (ANC) have rebuffed a bid by President Nelson Mandela to make the ruling party's Executive Council more representative of South Africa's diverse population, ANC officials said Tuesday.

Speaking on the fourth day of a five-day ANC national congress, ANC member Kader Asmal said delegates rejected Mr. Mandela's proposal to hand-pick the 60 National Executive Committee (NEC) members to ensure that the decision-making body represents all segments of the population.

Mr. Asmal told journalists that Mr. Mandela's proposal had been withdrawn and the procedure for nominating the 60 candidates Tuesday would "proceed as normal," with proposals being made from the floor and elections held afterwards.

Mr. Mandela's initiative, detailed in the Star newspaper Tuesday, included the creation of a six-member special committee appointed by the president to influence ethnic, racial, gender and regional balance in the NEC.

Senior sources in the ANC told the newspaper that it had become clear that a majority of the 2,700 delegates gathered here had come out strongly against the plan,

branding it as undemocratic, and demanded that the NEC be chosen by ordinary direct voting.

Faced with implacable opposition, the high-powered committee — which included South African Communist Party (SACP) Secretary-General Charles Ngqula and Sam Shilowa, head of the influential Congress of South African Trade Unions — withdrew its recommendations and was dissolved.

Opening the congress Saturday in the city where the organisation was created 82 years ago, Mr. Mandela drove home the need for the ANC — which took power after historic all-race elections in April — to aggressively reach out to racial minorities and to steer away from being a purely black organisation.

"It is not good for a proposal that comes from the president to be defeated, but unfortunately this one has to be because it is undemocratic," a source told the Star.

His popularity undimmed, however, Mr. Mandela was Monday re-elected unopposed as ANC leader.

Indian opposition calls scandal report a cover-up

NEW DELHI (R) — Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's government, trying to shake off corruption charges, released a new report into a \$1.3 billion stock market scandal Tuesday but opposition leaders called it a cover-up.

"There is nothing new in this report," said Mohan Singh of the opposition Samta Party. "The prime minister has become an incarnation of corruption."

Mr. Rao ordered the revised report after the opposition rejected an initial summary of government action taken in the wake of the 1992 financial scandal in which bankers and brokers illegally siphoned funds from government securities into company shares.

Opposition parties had demanded punishment for cabinet ministers, including Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, who might have prevented the scandal.

The new report was aimed at silencing opposition parties which, emboldened by landslide victories in recent state polls and sending an advantage ahead of fresh state elections in February, have redoubled their attacks on the government's integrity.

But opposition leaders immediately dismissed the report, saying it broke no new ground. "This is not a revised

action taken report but a revised cover-up report," said Jaswant Singh, leader of the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party.

The report, presented to parliament by the finance minister, said the government had visited its stance in 147 of 273 areas covered in its controversial "action taken report" of last July.

Cited strengthened safeguards on securities transactions by banks, tighter supervision of non-banking financial companies and imposition of fines on banks.

But the report stopped short of recommending that ministers linked to the scam should be punished, saying Manmohan Singh, former Junior Revenue Minister Rameshwar Thakur and former Petroleum Minister B. Shankaranand had already stated their positions to parliament on the scandal.

The opposition has demanded that Mr. Thakur, now junior rural development minister, and Mr. Shankaranand, health minister, be sacked. Mr. Singh has twice offered to resign over the securities scandal, but Mr. Rao turned him down.

"The ministers have been found to be directly liable," Jaswant Singh said. "On that one count alone, this (report) is deserving of total rejection."

Military chiefs study U.N. Bosnia plans

THE HAGUE (R) — Military chiefs of countries with peacekeeping forces in Bosnia met Tuesday to finalise proposals to repair a shattered U.N. mission and help it carry out humanitarian work as a third winter of war grips the land.

General Bertrand De Lapresle, commander of the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR), told reporters the plans were not intended to transform the force into a tough military operation.

"What we need most of all is more help for our humanitarian work," he said on arrival for the second day of a two-day meeting.

He declined to give details of the plans designed to stop weeks of Serb harassment of peacekeepers, including attacks and hostage-taking, which have demoralised the lightly-equipped force and prompted calls for a complete withdrawal.

Vitaly Churkin, Russia's envoy to Brussels, the seat of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), also attended the meeting.

Moscow is a key member of the five-country big power group trying to negotiate a peace settlement but has often differed with other members — the United States, France, Britain and Germany — over policy towards Serbs.

Mr. Churkin said the military chiefs had considered several detailed plans for improving UNPROFOR's operations.

"Yes of course, we have a number of concrete measures," Mr. Churkin said. NATO defence heads examined plans Monday to strengthen the force and prevent a collapse that would damage peacekeeping operations worldwide.

On Tuesday, they were joined by non-NATO countries contributing to UNPROFOR in Bosnia.

The meeting was expected to endorse several proposals and send them to national capitals and the United Nations for approval.

The plans include sending more equipment, combining small groups of peacekeepers into larger units to make them less vulnerable, and the opening of an air corridor from the Adriatic to Sarajevo.

The Dutch chief of defence staff, General Henk Van Den Broemen, told reporters after Monday's meeting the talks had focused on ways to improve UNPROFOR's effectiveness within the existing U.N. mandate.

Scalfaro urges calm in Italian showdown

ROME (R) — Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi will address parliament Wednesday at the start of a two-day no-confidence debate that is widely expected to bring down his stormy seven-month-old government.

Party leaders in the Chamber of Deputies set the timetable for the showdown as President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, the ultimate arbiter in Italian politics, appealed for calm in one of the worst political crises to batter the country for 20 years.

Mr. Berlusconi, facing three no-confidence motions, said Monday night that his supporters would take to the streets in a "great tide" of protest if he is toppled and called for fresh elections as fast as possible.

His remarks drew angry protests from the opposition, which accused the billionaire businessman of inciting insurrection.

"What is this? A dress rehearsal for civil war?" asked Rocco Buttiglione, leader of the centrist Popular Party (PPI).

Mr. Berlusconi will address the lower house at 1300 GMT Wednesday, with voting likely Friday morning after an expected 22 hours of debate on the three separate mo-

tions.

"The bullfight begins at two o'clock. We all know how bullfights begin but how they are going to end," cabinet spokesman Giuliano Ferrara, the minister for relations with parliament, told reporters.

Luigi Petrini, parliamentary leader of the Northern League, retorted: "Come off it. Bullfights almost always end with the bull being killed."

The federalist League, the ally-turned-enemy in Mr. Berlusconi's crumbling five-party coalition, has submitted one of the three no-confidence motions in tandem with the PPI.

The other two were presented by the communist re-foundation party and the main opposition Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), which has submitted a similar motion to the Senate.

"Nunc est bibendum," (now is the time to drink a toast), the League's combative leader Umberto Bossi told reporters Monday night, quoting the same Latin phrase media mogul Berlusconi used on his path to triumph in general elections last March.

Mr. Bossi says he has 325 of the 630 chamber votes, more than the absolute

majority of 316 needed to oust Mr. Berlusconi.

He wants a broad-based administration involving PPI and the ex-communist PDS to replace Mr. Berlusconi's centre-right government and lead Italy to institutional and electoral reform.

His project, branded a royal of voters by Mr. Berlusconi, threatens to split northern-based party.

State radio said 45 Le parliamentarians, members of the Chamber and the Senate, had refused to back motion. It was not clear whether they would abstain or abstain.

The group, which includes Interior Minister Roberto Maroni, is more than a quarter of the 162 Le deputies and senators most commentators believe it was not enough to avert government's downfall.

Mr. Berlusconi, owner of \$7 billion a year empire, stormed to victory last March at the head of a "Freedom Alliance" coalition with the League in northern and the far right National Alliance in central and southern Italy.

He told Italians Monday night that his overthrow would betray voters and victory to the losers of elections.

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Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation, established 1975.

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Unity's no belly dance

EGYPT'S DECISION to forge links with the Maghreb Union may seem benign at first glance but in reality the step has many implications for the Arab World. True that Cairo is seeking only an observer status with the North-African Arab Union for the time being but all indications point to imminent full membership of Egypt in the union in a relatively short period of time. The biggest loser in this new Egyptian policy would be the Arab League itself which Egypt hosts and historically led. The league is the foremost pan-Arab institution that was founded on the promise of Arab integration. But the ongoing process of fragmentation in the Arab World has so changed the league that Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres is now proposing its replacement by a new association for all countries in the Middle East.

The fact that several Arab states have established or are about to set up relations with Israel cannot mean the end of hopes for Arab integration or the failure of their national institutions. If the Arab governments wish to move in that direction they will soon discover that their peoples are not of the same mind or sentiment. Thus, instead of bolstering the North-African Arab Union or even the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Arab governments should direct their attention to strengthening the Arab League itself. Cairo of all Arab states should be the first Arab party to work for stopping the slide, in this case by abstaining from shifting its position from one Arab bloc to the other as if it all was a game of musical chairs. The Maghreb union has established its usefulness for neither the Arab countries in North Africa nor for the Arab Nation as a whole. It is a defunct union by all standards and no amount of public display of solidarity or support for it would change the basics. Even the GCC has seen better times in the past with strains showing in its structure and aims.

Perhaps Egypt thinks that by sitting on both sides of the fence it stands to enhance its Arab stature and international prestige. Confirmed reports suggest that Egypt has been flirting with the idea of joining the North African union for a number of years that date back to 1989 when the union was established in Morocco. Perhaps what may have prompted Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to apply for membership is his country's frustration with existing Arab blocs including the defunct Arab Cooperation Council and the non-realisation of the Arab common market. All these reasons, though, do not justify any further attempt to sub-divide the Arab Nation more than it is divided already.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

ONLY TWO months before revising U.N. stand on the embargo on Iraq, the United States creates a new problem to delay the end of the sanctions by claiming that Iraq has been involved in selling oil products and dates to Iran, said Al Ra'i daily. The paper said that despite independent reports that half a million Iraqi children have died as a result of the embargo, Washington is still insisting on starving and murdering the Iraqi population for no crime and without any legal justification. If it is true that Iran is serving as a conduit for helping Iraq export products, then this could be a very positive development, showing that Tehran is now committed to Islamic and Islamic brotherhood principles, said the paper. We hope Iran would come to the help of their Iraqi brothers and act differently from the Arab states which have not lifted a finger to save the lives of the starving Iraqis, the paper continued.

COMMENTING ON a visit to Egypt by the Israeli president, a writer in Al Ra'i daily said it was designed to warm the cool relations between Cairo and Tel Aviv. The Israelis are concerned with achieving their own goals without giving the Arabs anything in return and without abandoning the occupied Arab lands, said Mahmoud Rimawi. The writer said Israel seeks to ensure its military superiority over the Arab forces for ever and demanded that Arabs establish good relations with the Jewish state while it continues to amass nuclear weapons and refuses to sign a nuclear non-proliferation treaty as demanded by Egypt and the Arab World. He said that Israel refuses to be committed to the implementation of the Oslo agreement with the Palestinians and seeks to prevent North Korea from supplying the Arabs with weapons to defend themselves against Israeli aggression. While continuing to deny the Palestinians their lawful rights of determining their own future, Israel continues to hold on to its annexation of Arab Jerusalem, said the writer. He said that sooner or later the Israelis will find out that their practices would not help them attain the aspired normalisation of relations with the Arab states.

WASHINGTON WATCH

The controversy over the 'PLO compliance report'

By Dr. James Zoghbi

A political storm is brewing in Washington, involving the peace process. The major parties to this developing struggle are the U.S. Department of State, and the pro-Labour and pro-Likud lobbies in the U.S. and their supporters in the U.S. Congress.

What has set the stage for this conflict was the Dec. 1, 1994, issuance of a document that has become known as the "PLO Compliance Report." In the report, the State Department reviews PLO behaviour over the past six months in an effort to determine whether or not the Palestinian leadership is honouring its commitment to the Middle East peace process.

The State Department is required to submit this report to Congress under the terms of the Middle East Peace Facilitation Act of 1994. According to this Act, all U.S. economic assistance to the Palestinian Authority is conditional on the PLO's:

- Renouncing the Arab League boycott of Israel;
- Urging the nations of the Arab League to end the boycott of Israel;
- Cooperating with efforts undertaken by the president of the United States to end the Arab League boycott of Israel;
- Condemning individual acts of terrorism and violence;
- Amending its national covenant to eliminate all references calling for the destruction of Israel.

The 13-page State Department report covers the period from June 1, 1994 to Nov. 30, 1994, and for the most part focuses on the PLO's response to violence against Israelis and the PLO's "commitment to seek a peaceful and negotiated settlement" with Israel.

"Because the pro-Israel lobbies have spent the past 20 years building a political powerhouse based on the war against the Palestinians, for a number of reasons the lobbies are finding it difficult to simply accept the movement towards peace in good faith and work to support the peace process."

While noting what it terms some "difficulties and failures (especially with regard to changing the "PLO's Covenant"), the State Department report "confirms the PLO's commitment" and notes that the organisation has "abided by its commitment to renounce terrorism." Nevertheless, the report notes that this late area (being Israel's most central concern) presents the PLO "with its most difficult challenge" and the report concludes that the Palestinian Authority "should do more in this critical area" and that, for its part, the U.S. administration "will continue to press the PLO to take the necessary actions to prevent acts of violence, to bring those responsible to justice and to abide by all its other commitments."

Since the report is only mildly critical and is genuinely supportive of PLO efforts, it appears to be the intent of the State Department that the president certify the PLO as being in compliance, so that U.S. economic aid can continue. It is this unspoken subtext to the report that has caused a flare-up among pro-Israel groups.

It should be noted, however, that all this discussion ignores several fundamental questions that will never be asked in Washington:

— Why is there no legislation requiring that aid to Israel be conditional on its compliance with the terms of the peace process?

— Is Israel in compliance with its commitments?

— What has happened to the U.S. aid to the Palestinians? And is it worth jumping through hoops to get it?

The origin of the Compliance Act in question is the result of the work of the pro-Israel lobbyists and their supporters in Congress.

Because the pro-Israel lobbies have spent the past 20 years building a political powerhouse based on the war against the Palestinians, for a number of reasons the lobbies are finding it difficult to simply accept the movement towards peace in good faith and work to support the peace process. Among these reasons are:

— They have built a national constituency among members of the Jewish community and in Congress based on a fear of Palestinians and opposition to their goals.

— Even those who have endorsed the peace process fear losing support in the Jewish community to pro-Likud forces, who are trying to portray them as "weak on the Palestinian issue."

— Quite simply, their power was built on this fear of Palestinian and opposing cooperation with the Arab World, and power is never easy to surrender.

Instead of moving to remove the encumbering anti-Palestinian legislation of the past 20 years and wholeheartedly support U.S. aid to Palestinians, the largest pro-Israel group American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), and its supporters in Congress wrote new legislation that "conditionally" removes old sanctions against the PLO and links U.S. aid to the Palestinians to conditions that are difficult to achieve or interpret.

At this time, AIPAC is being pushed hard from the right by the very pro-Likud Zionist Organisation of America (ZOA), which has capitalised on latent anti-Palestinian sentiment (created in some measure by AIPAC over the years) among many in the Jewish community and the knee-jerk support for such attitudes (also largely created by AIPAC) among many members of Congress.

Even before the Compliance Act was passed, the ZOA formed its own Peace Accords Monitoring Committee (PAM) in the Congress and quickly drew over 50 members to its ranks. The purpose of PAM was simply to monitor PLO compliance and pressure the administration to force the PLO to continue to make one-sided concessions to Israel. And while both the Israeli government and the U.S. opposed the formation of PAM and the passage of the Compliance Act, AIPAC went along with both efforts out of fear of losing ground to the ZOA.

The AIPAC report, entitled "Problems in the PLO's compliance with its commitments," is sharply critical of the PLO performance in "meeting Israel's security concerns" through its failure to take "firm, effective action against... the terror of extremists... and incitement to violence against Israelis." While nominally "pro-peace" (like the Labour government it says it supports), AIPAC attempts to walk the fine line of "supporting the peace process" and covering its rear flank against attacks from the ZOA that it is "giving in to the PLO."

In a real sense, this is a pattern of behaviour displayed by the Labour government itself. The net result is that the extreme right wing is driving the political debate and determining the political behaviour of both the Labour government and its lobby in the U.S.

The ZOA report was issued on Nov. 28 and entitled "On the eve of the State Department report on PLO compliance, the ZOA finds the PLO is not in compliance with accords." It is a shrill attack on 12 areas of behaviour, with most of the reporting based on false conclusions and disinformation. It blames the PLO for "violating its obligation" to halt terrorist attacks by PLO groups, to refrain from hostile propaganda against Israel, to change the covenant, etc.

After the State Department report was released and it became clear that the U.S. was prepared to certify the PLO's compliance, the ZOA immediately attacked the official U.S. report, terming it a "whitewash" that "ignores, minimises and whitewashes the PLO's numerous serious violations of the accords."

The ZOA's president concludes:

"President Clinton has pledged \$500 million to the PLO and he will be considering the State Department's report as he decides whether or not to send the money to a group that has not always shown it has transformed itself from the terrorist organisation it always was. We hope that the president will take into consideration congressional opinion and the many serious flaws in the State Department's report. As U.S. law appropriately requires, the PLO should not receive U.S. aid so long as the PLO is violating the accords, by not condemning terrorism, not punishing terrorists, not urging Palestinian Arabs to give up violence and not changing the PLO covenant, which calls for Israel's destruction."

Not to be outdone, but still seeking to walk its tightrope, AIPAC issued a statement of its own, expressing its "disappointment" with the State Department report and

noting that "peace requires Arafat to change his conduct, but the State Department 'report fails to hold Arafat to high enough standard.'"

An interesting twist to this struggle between the ZOA and AIPAC for the best anti-PLO credentials has been the fact that the Labour government immediately responded by attacking the AIPAC response as not being in the interest of peace. The Israeli ambassador to Washington, in a conference call to the Conference of President of Major American Jewish Organisations, personally urged them not to criticise the State Department report. And Israel Foreign Ministry officials made it clear to Jewish pro-Israel lobbyists that the Israeli government sees continuing U.S. aid to Palestinians as important to maintaining the peace process.

Three days after its initial critical statement, AIPAC was forced to issue a clarification which, while not backing away from its prior criticism of the PLO, notes that AIPAC "is not opposed to the continuation" of U.S. aid to the Palestinians, since this aid is "critically needed to improve the desperate economic situation in the impoverished Gaza Strip."

Other Jewish organisations, for example, Americans for Peace Now, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League B'nai B'rith, did issue statements more favourable to the State Department report and called for continuation of U.S. economic assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

The next step in this process will come on January when President Clinton is required by the Compliance Act to accept or reject the State Department report and to

"The asymmetry of political power in Washington continues to shape the debate on Middle East issues. Influential pro-Israel groups are largely responsible for generating the political pressure on Congress and on the administration to deal with compliance issues in a one-sided fashion."

certify (or not) the PLO as qualified for continuing U.S. aid. It is almost certain that Mr. Clinton will certify continuation of the aid. But the matter will not rest there. When the new Congress convenes in January, PAM members (under the strong influence of the ZOA, which founded the group) will continue to pressure the administration and will most probably call for congressional hearings on the PLO's compliance.

Since Senator Jesse Helms, the incoming Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Senator Arlen Specter and Richard Shelby (the authors of the PLO compliance Act) are all members of PAM, there will be pressure to convene such hearings — even over the objections of the U.S. administration and the Israeli government.

The lessons in all of this are clear. The asymmetry of political power in Washington continues to shape the debate on Middle East issues. Influential pro-Israel groups are largely responsible for generating the political pressure on Congress and on the administration to deal with compliance issues in a one-sided fashion.

For the peace process to be real and the U.S. to be able to truly serve as an even-handed arbiter, there must be a constituency for a balance peace. It is clear, by their behaviour, that the major pro-Israel groups (AIPAC included, despite its statements to the contrary) are not committed to balance. They, like the leadership in Israel are still driven by their prejudices and fear of the past. They expect Palestinians, all other Arabs and even Americans to change, but have not made the same change themselves.

This does not mean that the peace process will end, but the one-sided pressure exerted by right wing groups has distorted and disfigured the peace process to the point where it has become an unrecognisable caricature of the process observers hoped for just over a year ago.

Yeltsin's silence on Chechnya baffling

By Deborah Seward
The Associated Press

MOSCOW — Boris Yeltsin's behaviour is baffling in the best of times. He has kept a firm grip on power despite frequent disappearances, reports of drunkenness and a habit of standing up foreign leaders.

By holding up in a hospital for minor nose surgery after launching a major military operation to squash separatists in southern Russia, Mr. Yeltsin has left the nation wondering just who is running the country.

In one of his few comments on the Chechnya invasion, Mr. Yeltsin Friday called the rebel republic a "sinister" hotbed of crime that threatens the world.

More isolated than ever, Mr. Yeltsin is losing most of his reformist allies in parliament, as well as the battle for public opinion over a war many Russians do not want.

For all his courage in defending democracy during the failed 1991 coup, Mr. Yeltsin is now being labelled a coward for cloaking himself in a Soviet-style veil of secrecy while Russian boys die for an unclear cause.

The weekly Literaturnaya Gazeta called the decision to send troops into the rebellious Republic of Chechnya "a terrible presidential mistake" that could result in a "second Afghanistan."

During the past three years, the Kremlin defused separatist drives in other parts of Russia with threats of economic sanctions and the promise of greater political autonomy.

Chechnya, which declared independence in November 1991, stubbornly refused to recognise Russian

authority.

The region became a notorious haven for criminals, money launderers, drug and arms traffickers, although Chechens claim their right to independence and say the Kremlin is flexing its muscles in Chechnya simply to retain power.

From the Kremlin's perspective, Chechnya's defiance fuels worries that the Russian Federation could disintegrate just like the Soviet Union did in 1991.

"Yeltsin succumbed to pressure from the military and the successor to the KGB," said Gerhard Simon, of Germany's Institute for Eastern and International Studies.

Troubled by low morale, a lack of funds and charges of widespread corruption, the army could benefit from a quick victory in Chechnya.

Striking at the Chechens and imposing order in their unruly republic could also improve Mr. Yeltsin's chances in the 1996 presidential elections, should the 63-year-old leader decide to run again.

"Yeltsin and his aides are interested in a successful little war that would raise their prestige," said Sergei Arutunov, chairman of the department of Caucasian studies at the Russian academy of sciences.

The fighting in Chechnya dominates Russian media and has deflected attention from the stagnating economy, the failure to control inflation and Mr. Yeltsin's ongoing budget battle with the parliament.

But any hopes the army and Mr. Yeltsin had for a rapid resolution of the Chechen crisis are rapidly fading amid Chechen resistance and a growing number of casualties.

Most of Mr. Yeltsin's re-

formist allies in the Russian parliament are now condemning the invasion of Chechnya as a threat to democracy. Some lawmakers have called for Mr. Yeltsin's impeachment.

The crisis could reignite the president's conflict with the legislature, which has not forgotten that Mr. Yeltsin sent tanks to blast the old parliament just a year ago.

Although many Russians dislike Chechens, public opinion polls show strong opposition to the decision to send in the army and to use force against civilian targets.

Over and over, Russian TV has shown pictures of Chechen women blocking the roads into their homeland to stop the tanks. TV also has shown ethnic Russians living in Chechnya sobbing over their destroyed homes and soldiers wounded or killed in the fighting.

Even the army appears divided. Several prominent generals have criticised the decision to use the army in Chechnya, and Russian television has shown interviews with soldiers in the field saying they do not want to fight.

Only the West has failed to voice its concern over the Russian advance on Chechnya, calling the crisis an internal Russian affair.

The longer the week-old crisis continues, the tougher Mr. Yeltsin's position becomes, a retreat would make him look weak, but a blood bath in Chechnya could unleash a public outcry.

Even if the Chechen crisis ultimately is resolved by negotiations, Mr. Yeltsin has done little to enhance his political authority or inspire confidence he can resolve conflicts without resorting to tanks and troops.

Technology and values are part of the same continuum

By FM-2030

ON FUNDAMENTAL issues such as immigration, crime, "traditional values," and the work ethic, it hardly makes a difference who is U.S. president or controls Congress.

These tracks are propelled by long-term irreversible forces such as decentralisation, diversification and globalisation, and are hardly affected by ideology or partisan politics.

Millions of legal and illegal immigrants will continue to cross national borders no matter what policies are adopted or how massive the barricades.

It is absurd to think that, in our global age, when a mounting avalanche of information and goods and dollars pours across borders every day, people will stay and marinate in their ancestral homelands. In our global age, territoriality is hopelessly anachronistic.

It is ridiculous to continue emphasising such traditional values as "hard work" and the "work ethic," yet invest billions of dollars every year on automation and ever smarter machines that permanently jettison millions of jobs and disassemble the old labour-intensive economics.

Hard work was a precondition for survival at one time, and therefore glorified. In our times of global surpluses and smart self-replicating machines, hard work is dumb economics. Hard work is a deterrent to greater prosperity. We can now produce more while working less.

The persistent emphasis on family values is yet another dead issue that sets off people's alarms. Even if every federal and state office in the U.S. were occupied by the

Christian right, the nuclear family would still continue its downward slide.

Nothing can reverse this trend.

Since the 1950s, the traditional nuclear family has dropped from representing around 85 per cent of American homes to less than 10 per cent. How illogical to think that profound changes could unfold in all areas of society, but not in our homes.

Government will continue to have less and less impact on people's lives. The trend everywhere is away from traditional concentrations of power.

"It is ridiculous to continue emphasising such traditional values as 'hard work' and 'work ethic,' yet invest billions of dollars every year on automation and ever smarter machines that permanently jettison millions of jobs and disassemble the old labour intensive economics."

The more centralised the sources of information, the more powerful the centres of authority (family, church, government). As information decentralises, the relative power of government declines.

This is particularly evident in post-industrial societies. Since the 1960s, the most profound transformations in the U.S. have been spearheaded by forces and people outside government — the women's movement, the biological revolution, the globalisation of life.

An administration may call itself conservative or liberal, but the environment in which it operates and which propels

it is revolutionary.

In the post-industrial world, elections are no longer an accurate gauge of a society's direction. This is as much leading as assessing the popularity of the Vatican by the size of crowds that greet the Pope in the streets and not paying attention to the fact that these crowds then go to ignore church teachings, divorce, abortion and women's rights.

It is absurd to want better technologies and a growing economy, yet still call for "traditional values." Technology and values are part of the same continuum —

cannot divorce the two. If you want advances in one area, you have to accept advances in the other.

Rather than dissipate millions of dollars on nasty political campaigns that attempt to freeze-frame the past, we should encourage new values and lifestyles and policies which will bring greater cohesion, abundance, leisure and growth as we prepare to lift off to a new century.

FM-2030 (his legal name) is a consultant in long-range planning to industry and the author of "Are You A Transhuman?" This article is reprinted from the Los Angeles Times.

كثيرا ما نرى

Panel presents law to encourage investments

(Continued from page 1)

raising the production capacity of the project by at least 25 per cent.

b) The production requirements needed for the approved project will be exempt of fees and taxes, except the sales tax, in accordance with regulations that the board issues for this purpose.

c) The project will be exempt for the period mentioned in F of this article from the taxes as follows:

i) Income and social taxes on the net profit of the project;

ii) Property tax belonging to the project and used for its objectives;

iii) The exemptions enjoyed by the project as mentioned in paras D and E of this article will be as follows:

i) For a period of five years if the project is in development region A;

ii) For a period of seven years if the project is in development region B;

iii) For a period of nine years if the project is in development region C;

iv) For a period of 12 years if the project is in development region D.

G) The exemptions mentioned in F above can be replaced by faster depreciation on assets at a rate between 20 and 40 per cent based on the type of assets and at the request of the investor and the approval of the committee.

H) Projects which are needed by the national economy and which serve its interests and which are listed by the council will be given three years of exemption in addition to the years mentioned under the provisions of this article. The projects list will be amended in accordance with the need of the economy and will be implemented on the existing projects.

I) Hotels, hospitals and medical treatment centres will be granted additional exemptions of taxes and tariffs for their purchases of furniture and equipment once every seven years.

J) In case the project is transferred during the exemption period from one development area to another it will be treated in terms of exemption as if it were established originally in the area where it was moved.

K) In spite of anything mentioned in any other legislation, the accumulated option reserve and the carried-over profits will be exempt from any capital tax if they are added to the capital and were used in expanding or developing the project.

L) Net profits of the project will, under a committee decision, be exempt from the income and social services taxes for another year in case of the following cases:

i) Expanding the project in a way that increases its production capacity for more than 25 per cent.

ii) If the net value of the final product rises over 50 per cent.

iii) If the project's exports of commodities and services reach 25 per cent of its sales. Thus it will be given another year for every equal percentage.

iv) If the project produces a new commodity product for the first time.

v) If the project was in the form of a public shareholding company or was converted into a public shareholding company.

B. The additional exemptions should not be applicable for more than a period of five years.

Article 8: Fees and other incentives will be created and granted to the distinguished production and exports activities and research and development programmes.

Article 9: Projects subject to the new law and exemptions and privileges according to article are applicable as of the start of actual production.

Article 10: Under this law a special committee will be set up to be known as the Higher Investment Committee chaired by the prime minister and including the ministers of industry and trade, finance, tourism and transport, the Central Bank governor, the head of the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce, and the president of the Amman Chamber of Industry as well as persons with sufficient experience. The director general of the Royal Commission for Reform and Modernisation (RCRM) will show up the implementation of the resolutions.

The council is to hold meetings at least once a month.

month.

Article 11: The council will be entrusted with creating the appropriate climate for investment to achieve the objectives of comprehensive development including:

A. Setting a national strategy for investments.

B. Working out a strategy to develop production sectors.

C. Working out investment policies.

D. Endorsing regulations related to investments.

E. Reviewing complaints about the committee's decision.

F. Approving the RCRM's annual budget.

Article 12: The RCRM aims to encourage investments in the Kingdom by:

1. Building up confidence in the investment climate;

2. Stimulating investments in projects;

3. Facilitating the registration of projects;

4. Following up on executed projects;

5. Creating an investment window to facilitate the issuance of licences for investments;

6. Offering advice and providing information and data concerning investments.

Article 13: The creation of a committee to be entrusted with the task of encouraging investments chaired by the minister of industry and trade and to include the director general of the Investment Promotion Department, representatives of the ministries of finance, municipal and rural affairs and tourism.

The committee is to meet upon a call from the prime minister and the minister has the right to invite persons to consult with them on investment matters and has the right to appoint one employee of the department to serve as rapporteur for the committee.

The committee has to be ready with replies to investors' queries concerning conditions for launching investment projects within two months.

Article 14: The committee assumes the following responsibilities:

A. Approval of projects whose legal conditions are finalised;

B. Approval of exemptions;

C. Approval of applications for the transfer of property ownership;

D. Recommending measures related to the creation of appropriate climates for investments;

E. Examining reports submitted to the RCRM department concerning projects benefiting from the law;

F. Setting programmes for promoting investments and attracting investors making sure that the projects which enjoy exemptions are in line with socio-economic development.

Article 15: Upon the committee's recommendations the council has the right to cancel exemptions and facilities for any project subject to the provisions of this law if violations of the regulations were discovered.

The council also has the right to cancel exemptions and facilities granted to a project if it is proved that the equipment and fixed assets intended for that particular project have been sold or used for other purposes.

Article 16: Non-Jordanian investors will be treated like Jordanian investors under this law.

Non-Jordanian investors have the right to invest in the following fields:

Industry, tourism, housing, health, education, modern technology and computer, maritime transport, railway and livestock.

Non-Jordanian investors have the right to hold up to 49 per cent of the capital of the following projects: Trade ventures, public shareholding companies, consultancy services, land and air transport contracting and agriculture.

No projects can be nationalised, confiscated, seized, impounded, frozen or placed under custody except under a court order.

Article 17: Investors benefiting from this law have to:

1. Inform the department in writing about the completion of the installation of assets and the date of production;

2. Open a bookkeeping system to be operated under an accredited auditor;

3. Open a register for inventory of all fixed assets

involved in the project.

4. Provide information and date and documents required by the department about the assets.

Article 18: A. In case of the transfer of ownership of projects the projects will continue to enjoy the original benefits and exemptions provided the new owner would pursue the same project in full.

B. Investors have the right to sell fixed assets to other investors who can benefit from the provisions of the same law for the same project under the same conditions with the committee's approval.

C. Investors have the right to sell fixed assets to any persons provided the new owner pay the required fees and the customs duty.

D. In case two firms merging, the resulting merger would be responsible to abide by the provisions of the law if any one of the two firms had enjoyed the exemptions under this law.

E. Investors have the right to export the fixed assets which enjoyed the exemptions.

F. The director has the right to exempt fixed assets from additional taxes if the cost prices of the fixed assets to be imported were raised in the country of origin.

Article 19: Investors have the right to transfer abroad foreign capital which entered the country and invested in projects in accordance with banking systems.

Article 20: Investors have the right to transfer abroad profits from investments in the country in accordance with legislations and banking laws.

Article 21: Non-Jordanian employees working in technical and administrative jobs in these projects have the right to transfer abroad 70 per cent of their salaries and their compensations according to Jordan's banking laws.

End-of-service compensation for non-Jordanians can be transferred abroad in full.

Article 22: Provisions of this law shall apply to non-Jordanians occupying technical or administrative posts, who are partners in an ordinary company or shareholders in a private shareholding company which owns the project.

Article 23: A. The Cabinet may, upon the recommendation of the committee, exempt every year a maximum of 10 per cent of the taxable income of any project in the industrial and mining sector from the income and social services tax if the exemption amount is allocated for constructing housing units for workers in the project, either directly by the company or indirectly through a specialised housing institution.

B. The exemption provided for in paragraph A of this article shall also be granted if the amount of exemption is used for the construction of cultural or health facilities benefiting project workers, provided that the Ministry of Labour attests that such buildings are suitable for such purposes.

C. Exemption will be granted from income tax for the annual expenditure on running and maintaining the premises referred to in paragraph B above.

D. If the project owner does not construct the buildings referred to in the paragraphs above within a period of three years since the date of granting the exemption by the council, any income exempted under it shall be taxable after that period.

Article 24: A. Guarantees accorded to Arab capitals under provisions of the agreement on investment and transfer of Arab capitals among Arab countries and all the agreements concluded among Arab countries and any amendments thereto shall also apply to Arab capital invested under provisions of this law.

B. Non-Arab investors will have the right to insure their capital and investments against non-commercial risks at any insurance company or institution.

Article 25: Principles and procedures

governing the resolution of conflicts resulting from investment operations and the arbitration measures to be followed in accordance with special regulations to be issued for this purpose.

Article 26: An industrial record will be established to record all machinery and equipment belonging to the projects in accordance with special legislation to be enacted for this purpose to facilitate obtaining credit facilities.

Article 27: A. Provisions of articles 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16 shall not apply to decisions passed by the Cabinet before the enforcement of this law.

B. Any investment projects approved under the provisions of the Investment Encouragement Law No. 11 of 1987 and the amendments thereto will continue to benefit from the exemptions from duties and taxes granted under that law without giving the project any further exemptions from duties and taxes provided by this law.

Article 28: The Investment Encouragement Law No. 11 of 1987, the amendments thereto and the regulations issued under it and the Law on Organising Arab and Foreign Investments No. 27 of 1992 and the regulations issued under it shall be cancelled.

Article 29: The prime minister and the ministers shall enforce the provisions of this law.

According to the RCRM statement, the draft law was based on a national strategy which aims, among other things, to:

— Raise the national economic performance.

— Enhance the national economy's capabilities and promote self-reliance.

— Achieve more control over national economic performance.

— Improve the country's balance of payments and foreign currency reserves and reduce imports and increase exports.

— Give a pioneering role to the private sector in investment.

— Create a sound and suitable investment and economic climate.

— Encourage the trend towards market economy and personal initiatives.

— Achieve social justice and equal distribution of profits of investments.

— Create new jobs.

— Develop the Jordanian specification and measurement systems with a view to improving quality of products.

— Unify measures and regulations regarding investments.

— Ensure foreign investments and the transfer of modern technology to Jordan.

— Encourage the creation of major corporations like public shareholding companies or holding companies.

— Benefit from other countries' experiences that achieved real and tangible successes from investments.

The statement stressed that in formulating the draft law, the RCRM was guided by the following general principles:

1. To ensure equal and fair distribution of the gains accruing from development.

2. To offer exemptions and facilities to projects which aim at ensuring food security and promote services.

3. Exempt all fixed assets and spare parts needed for production from taxes and fees.

4. Grant additional exemptions for the development of existing projects.

5. Grant additional privileges to holding companies or shareholding companies.

6. Introduce simple rules governing investments.

7. Open the door for foreign capital.

8. Open the door for foreign capital and its profits made here to be transferred abroad.

9. Facilitate settlement of disputes over involving investment in Jordan.

10. Create an administration in caring for investment and supervising investments.

11. Create an industrial register to list all equipment.

12. To offer incentives and prizes to encourage distinguished production works and exports.

13. Prevent any form of confiscation, or nationalisation of projects.

14. Exempt profits carried over from the previous years from income or social services taxes.



General view of the place where two bombs exploded in Grozny causing at least one death and many injured Tuesday (AFP photo)

Thousands flee Grozny as Russian

(Continued from page 1)

ance with the federal border control laws.

The medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres in Brussels Tuesday estimated the number of dead from fighting around Grozny at around 1,000.

Almost 70,000 have fled Chechnya into neighbouring republics in the past few weeks, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said in Geneva.

Around 60,000 people have fled into the neighbouring republic of Ingushetia, while around 8,000 Chechens have fled into the republic of Dagestan, the ICRC said.

More and more civilians, mostly women, children and the elderly, are being housed there (in Ingushetia) by people who have no blood relationship with them," an ICRC spokesman said.

Former Russian parliament chief Ruslan Khasbulatov, himself a Chechen, on Tuesday called for Russian forces to stop their air raids over Chechnya which he said

were causing many civilian deaths.

Mr. Khasbulatov, speaking at a Moscow news conference, said: "The problem as I see it is to stop these bombing attacks which are causing innumerable deaths among the peaceful population."

But the ex-parliament chief, an old foe of President Boris Yeltsin, backed Moscow in setting a priority on the need to disarm Mr. Dudayev's independence fighters.

"I have been calling for disarmament of this repressive regime since the beginning, the only problem is how it can be carried out," said Mr. Khasbulatov.

Mr. Khasbulatov was one of the big losers in Mr. Yeltsin's smashing of the parliamentary rebellion in the White House in Moscow in October 1993. He led an abortive peacekeeping mission in Chechnya before Mr. Yeltsin sent in the troops and tanks on Dec. 11.

Russia's human rights commissioner Sergei Kovalev, who rushed to Chechnya after Moscow sent troops to the

rebel region, urged the world community to intervene to stop the fighting.

Mr. Kovalev, speaking to reporters in Grozny, said he and his team had been told of at least 40 Chechen civilians killed in Russian bombing raids and in fighting.

He said the scale of human rights violations by Russian troops in Chechnya during the conflict war was "unprecedented" and exclusively Moscow's fault.

Appealing to the United Nations and the Organisation on Security and Cooperation

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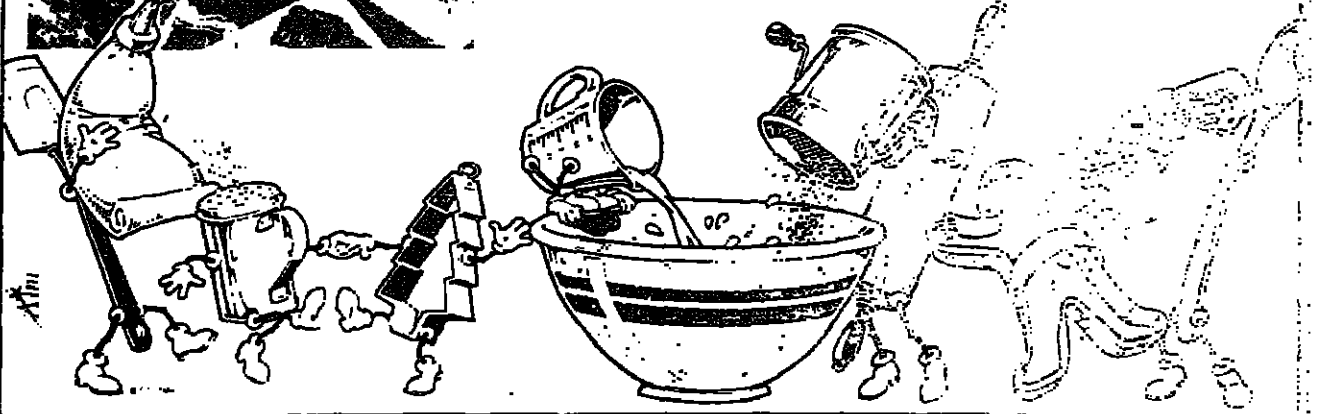
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World set for two years of economic health — OECD

PARIS (R) — The economies of the world's richest nations are in good health and look set to stay that way as unemployment falls from recent records and inflation remains under control, the OECD said Tuesday.

In an unusually upbeat report, the Paris-based think-tank said the growth rate of its 25 members' economies should quicken to three per cent in 1995 from 2.8 per cent this year.

Growth should continue almost unabated into 1996, with Japan and Europe filling a gap in output left by the U.S. economic recovery coming off the boil.

"Economic prospects for the OECD area are at present better than they have been for several years," the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said in its latest semi-annual economic outlook.

"Recoveries have spread to all major regions and are

becoming increasingly well established," it pointed out.

But the OECD stopped short of congratulating policymakers and, as usual, peppered its report with warnings of the risks that lie ahead.

"The challenge now facing policymakers is to sustain the current revival of non-inflationary growth and of employment as effectively as possible," it said.

In the United States, where the economy is running at close to capacity, monetary policy may not have been tightened enough.

The OECD said this year's rises in U.S. short-term interest rates, which have spooked markets, should continue next year. By 1996 U.S. three-month money should stabilise at about 6.75 per cent compared with 5.50 per cent now.

Forecasting a climb in U.S. inflation to 3.3 per cent from an average of 2.0 per cent this year, it called on the Federal

Reserve, the U.S. central bank, not to be shy about tightening policy further.

"Preparedness to apply further restraint would appear to be the best policy posture at this point in the business cycle, as the risks from remaining too restrictive for a short period are less than those of allowing inflation to reignite," it said.

Britain, Australia and New Zealand, whose recoveries are also fairly well advanced, may also have to tighten monetary policy further to be sure that overheating is avoided.

Continental Europe, on the other hand, is unlikely to run into the economic buff a whole should rise to 3.0 per cent next year from 2.3 per cent and then nudge up to 3.2 per cent in 1996.

Still, the inflation-wary German Bundesbank — whose stance has a key influence on those of its neighbours — has limited room to ease its policy further be-

cause inflation looks set to stick at 2.0 per cent or a little higher next year.

Japan, lagging behind its competitors in the economic cycle, will not top average annual growth of three per cent until 1996.

Unemployment will decline almost everywhere in the OECD as new jobs are created by increasing output and demand.

"As the upswing gathers pace throughout the area during the next two years, prospects for labour markets should continue to improve," the OECD said.

It forecasts an increase in employment which should cut the average unemployment rate to around 7.7 per cent of the workforce by the end of 1996 from 8.2 per cent this year.

Europe will be no exception. But the area, criticised in an OECD jobs report last summer for its rigid labour markets, will be stuck with a jobless rate in double figures.

Yugoslav power system at last gasp

BELGRADE (AFP) — Ramp Yugoslavia is running out of electricity, leaving the economy threatened with paralysis and the people of Serbia and Montenegro facing a winter without light or heating.

There are power cuts every day throughout the country, which the suppliers Electricity of Serbia (E.S.) have divided into zones, each being cut off several hours at a time.

The electricity network is saturated and badly maintained because of the international embargo against Yugoslavia in force since May 1992. The E.S., a thriving business not so long ago, lost hundreds of millions of dollars this year and can no longer meet the needs of industry or the general population.

E.S. officials say the cuts are due partly to the low prices charged to consumers and partly to the impossibility of keeping installations in good working order because of lack of spare parts, which cannot be imported because of the embargo. The state has so far kept electricity tariffs much lower than the European average, but that causes the utility enormous losses.

Consumption is rising as winter sets in. Taking advantage of the low price, Yugoslavs make massive use of electrical heaters. Heaters using gas or other fuels are no use because of the embargo on imports of oil. The E.S. set out a list of indispensable repairs a few months ago costing \$200 million but the government has so far allocated only half that sum.

As a consequence the utility has cut its annual output by a fifth to 30 billion Kw/h. Breakdowns at hydroelectric and thermal power stations were upkeep is neglected are legion.

Karachi bullets tear apart economic 'tiger' ambitions

KARACHI (AFP) — Daily gun battles and sniper killings in Karachi are undermining Pakistan's national ambition to become Asia's next boom economy, senior businessmen fear.

The president of the Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry, S.M. Muneer, and other senior business people, said: "We want to be the next Asian tiger. But we cannot even become the Asian cat at this rate."

He has added his voice to those who have urged the government to call in the army to halt the spiral of violence.

More than 650 people have been killed in political, ethnic and religious violence this year. The level of violence has steadily escalated over the past five months. Troops were sent back to their barracks at the end of the November and December has been the bloodiest month with more than 100 killed already.

"Without safety not a single penny will be invested in Sindh," the southern province where Karachi is located, said Mohammad Umer Saliya, central chairman of the All Pakistan Organisation of Small Trades and Cottage Industries.

The Karachi Stock Exchange (KSE) has fallen drastically in recent days and former KSE president Anif Habib said government "apathy" toward the worsening law and order was the major reason for the decline in the bourse trend.

Fear of the city's political violence has been compounded by the increase in armed robberies.

"No industry has been running at full capacity since July," said Siraj Kassem Teli, president of the Sindh Industrial Trading Estate in the city's troubled western district. "We have lost almost one month of production."

He cited an increase in robberies and massive power breakdowns during last summer's monsoon rains as the main reasons for the decrease in industrial production.

Businessmen said that foreign investment was negligible except in the energy sector and even local investors were seeing to relocate from Karachi to the safer Punjab province.

About 90 per cent of local investment has been in Punjab, Mr. Teli said.

City-wide strikes frequently turn violent and commercial activity comes to a halt whenever a strike is called by a political group. At least three of Karachi's five districts frequently become battle-zones, as political activists conduct running gunbattles on the streets and from rooftops.

Some businessmen, while insisting on the need for a political solution to the city's problems, openly advocate the return of the army with enhanced judicial powers to restore order.

"We want peace at any cost," says Mr. Umer Saliya. He has been shot at twice in recent weeks, once near the private residence of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in Karachi's elite Clifton area. Mr. Saliya travels with armed bodyguards and says he fears for his life and that of his family.

"No one is safe anywhere," says Muneer. The army previously spent 29 months in Karachi attempting to keep order. Giving the army judicial powers, which would entail a suspension of civilian courts, would be tantamount to a "mini-martial law," one diplomat said.

"Most businessmen said they could not relocate their industries or companies out of Karachi because it would be difficult to start from scratch in a new environment."

But one businessman said that he had colleagues who were maintaining flats in Islamabad or Dubai as back-ups should conditions worsen further in this southern port city.

Bulgaria's Socialists outline economic plans

SOFIA (R) — The Bulgarian Socialist Party, which will hold a majority of seats in the country's third post-communist parliament, sees mass privatisation and stricter tax collection as the keys to economic recovery.

"The emphasis of our economic policy will be boosting production and speeding mass privatisation, which is key to structural reform," Nikola Koiachev, the chief economic expert of the former Communist Party, told Reuters in an interview Monday.

Bulgaria, which held parliamentary elections Sunday, has been criticised by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) for

the slow pace of privatisation and structural reform since it began a transition to a market economy in 1991.

A legal framework for mass privatisation was adopted five months ago but the non-party cabinet's resignation in September blocked implementation.

Mr. Koiachev, chairman of the Socialists' economic and social policy committee, said Bulgarians could not afford market-based privatisation, so state equity in some 300 state firms would be transferred to private owners via mass privatisation.

"We favour the Czech model of voucher privatisation," Mr. Koiachev said, adding: "Enterprises whose

condition is beyond repair will be liquidated."

Transforming the privatisation agency into a ministry for privatisation of state equity in enterprises was part of the changes planned.

"We also plan to strengthen tax control in the private sector," Mr. Koiachev said.

Tax collection from private business should be tightened up, as it accounted for some 25 per cent of gross domestic product but paid only two per cent of tax revenue.

Mr. Koiachev said rather than just curbing consumer demand through monetary measures, as had been done so far, stabilisation should be achieved by boosting production in the state and private

sector, which would help keep inflation down.

"We will seek to strengthen production by restoring our markets in former socialist countries," he said.

Bulgaria's output rose in October by four per cent, compared with the same period last year, indicating that the deep industrial recession which has accompanied economic transition might be nearing its end.

Mr. Koiachev said the current state of the economy was unsuitable for pegging the lev to a Western currency — an idea floated by the IMF to try to stabilise the flagging currency — but that Bulgaria would continue servicing its foreign debts.

China sets out anti-inflation plans for '95

BEIJING (AFP) — Senior Chinese officials have ordered strict measures to fight inflation in 1995 but analysts here dismissed the plans as backdated and unimaginative.

Vice President of State Planning Zou Jiahua and State Planning Commission Minister Chen Jinhua told a national planning conference here that all levels of government must strengthen management over consumption funds, such as wages, to ease inflationary pressure, the China Daily reported.

At a separate conference, Finance Minister Liu Zhongli pledged to adopt tight fiscal policies in 1995 in a bid to control inflation, curb expenditure and restrain invest-

ment, the report said.

Year-on-year inflation hit 27.7 per cent in October, giving a rate for the first 10 months of 1994 of some 22 per cent — more than double the state target. The government is aiming for 15 per cent annual inflation in 1995.

Foreign economists were unimpressed by the plans put forward for 1995 at the recent meetings, saying that they, like the September's party plenum and last month's conference, contained few new ideas.

"Their plans sound grander in description than they will be in implementation," said one Western diplomat, noting the officials were reiterating policies that had little effect this year on inflation and other problems.

"Given the size of China's problems, these measures can only have a limited impact," the diplomat added.

Delegates at the planning conference blamed this year's high inflation on excessive money supply caused by the rapid expansion of fixed asset investment and expenditure on wages and bonuses.

Meanwhile, the chief of the World Bank's resident mission here, Pieter Bottelier, warned that inflation would remain a long-term headache for the Chinese authorities.

"China's inflation is to a large extent induced by the market-oriented reform and will be inevitable for years to come," Mr. Bottelier said in

an interview with the official Xinhua news agency.

However, he added there were indications that inflation "may have peaked and may fall from now on."

Food shortages created by "agriculture's weak foundation" and serious natural disasters, as well as chaotic market distribution and a faulty price monitoring system were also behind the government's failure to bring the index down, they said.

Mr. Zou and Mr. Chen reportedly told the conference that steps must be taken next year to strengthen the agricultural sector, increase the acreage of grain and cotton, and strictly control circulation of staples.

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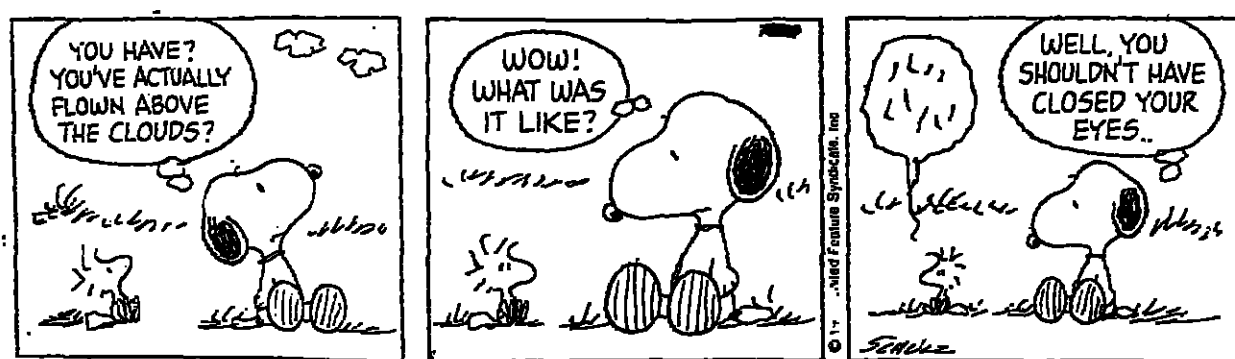
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HASSLE-FREE CHRISTMAS

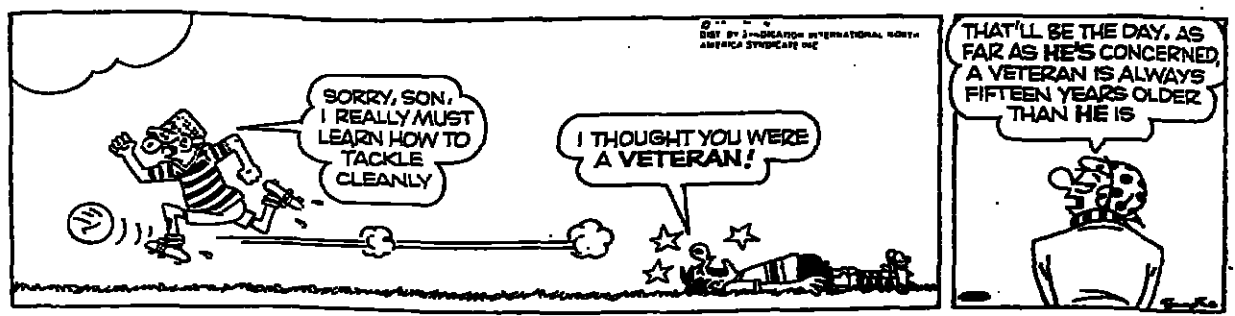
Some of us are organised and have already completed our Christmas shopping but, if like a great many of us, you are still in a quandary about where to start and prefer to do it all in one or two big sessions, here are some ideas to help make the seasonal big shop less traumatic.

DAJANI'S
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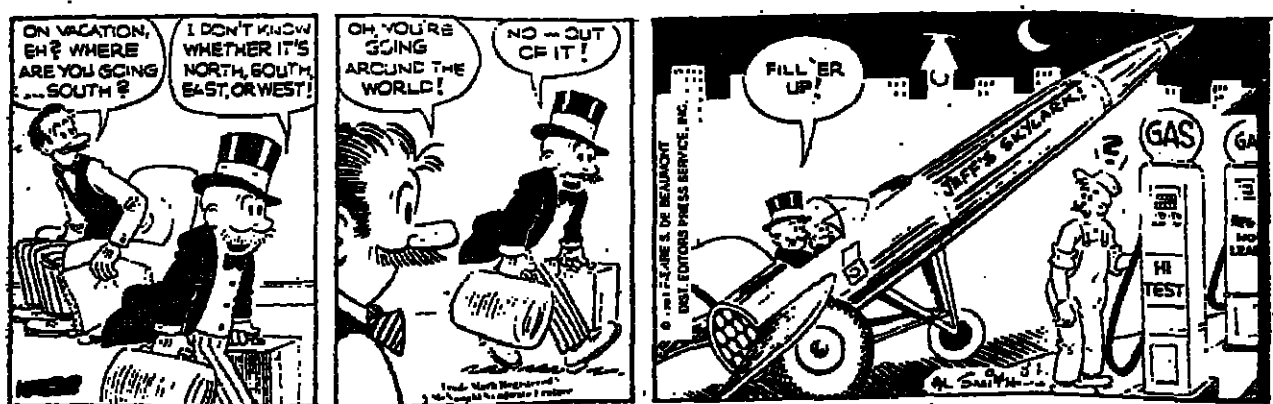
Peanuts



Andy Capp



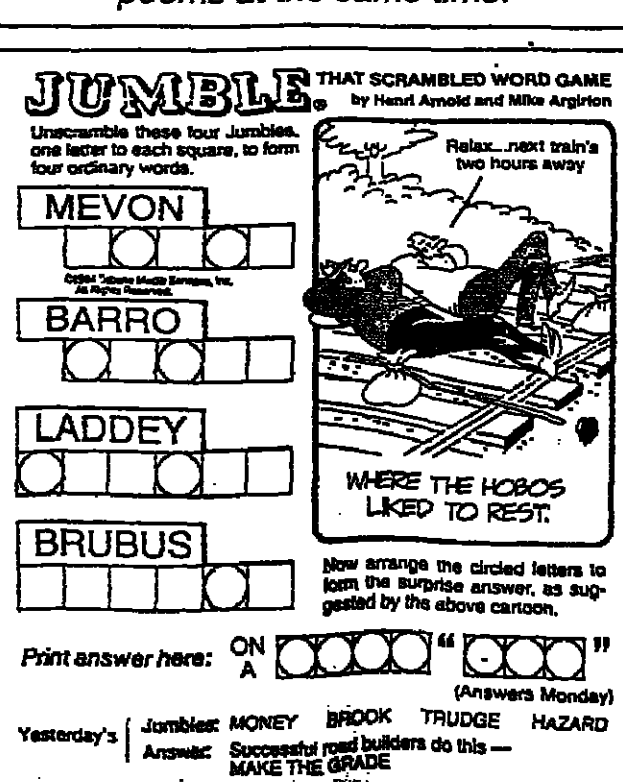
Mutt'n'Jeff



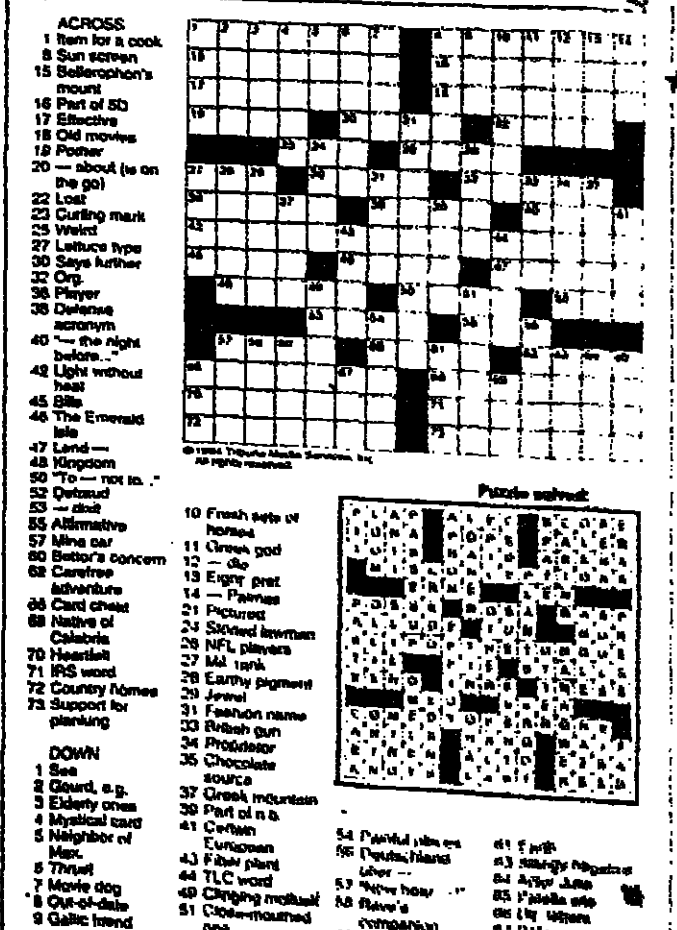
THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME



THE Daily Crossword by James Berwick



Business daily beat

A review
of economic news
from the Arabic press

Jordan plans blitz of fairs, exhibitions

★ The Jordan Export Development and Commercial Centre Corp. (JEDCCC) is now moving to participate in international fairs and in holding specialised exhibitions in many countries which Jordanian exporters have not yet tapped. JEDCCC Director-General Mohammad Halaqah said Jordan will participate in the Gent international fair in Belgium next year and will also organise a fair in London in cooperation with the British-Arab Chamber of Commerce. Jordan will additionally participate in the "Arab week" exhibition which the Arab community in the U.S. will hold in the state of Illinois. Dr. Halaqah said that in order to introduce Jordanian industrial products and open new export opportunities, JEDCCC has plans to stage exhibitions in Ukraine, Slovakia, Greece, Dubai, South Africa, Djibouti and Lebanon. Locally, the corporation has plans to hold specialised exhibitions for construction, clothing and furniture industries, similar to the ones held earlier this year for engineering and electrical industries (Al Ra'i).

★ The third exhibition of citrus fruit which was opened by Jordan Cooperative Organisation Director-General Jamal Bdour Monday is being held at the Cooperative Institute and will last for two weeks (Sawt Al Shaab).

★ All those who have billboards on roadsides or those who wish to put some up must obtain a licence from the Traffic and General Safety Directorate, Eighth Circle, Amman. Unless renewals are obtained before Jan. 31, 1995, the Ministry of Public Works will remove all unlicensed billboards and fine the violators (Al Dustour).

★ Foreign workers in the Kingdom's hotel industry have reached 13 per cent. In Aqaba's classified hotels the rate was 32 per cent of all hotel workers at the end of 1993 (Al Dustour).

★ A court ordered that the Jordan Ready-To-Wear Manufacturing Company be liquidated obligatorily. The company, which is located on King Hussein Street, near Jabri Restaurant, was registered at the Ministry of Industry and Trade on Dec. 27, 1980, as a public shareholding company with a JD 1.1 million capital. The company had accumulated JD 1.8 million in losses by April 30, 1988, and was indebted by over JD 1.4 million. Attempts to rescue the company failed. The company did not provide the companies' comptroller with any financial statements since 1983 and ceased operations after auctioning all its assets (Al Ra'i).

★ Repairs to the Amman-Irbid freeway, which is under constant danger from landslides and huge rocks falling on it, could cost up to JD15 million (Al Dustour).

★ The Ministry of Finance presented to the Council of Ministers an amendment to the law of placing fixed assets as security for credits. Under the amendment, an auction on a real estate cannot be opened at less than 50 per cent of the estimated value of the property (Al Dustour).

★ Due to large amounts of exports to Arab Gulf countries at the expense of the local market, the price of a kilogramme of local (baladi) meat has gone up from JD3.4 to JD5.6. A kilogramme of local beef sells at JD5. The price of imported meat ranges between JD2 and 3 a kilogramme. Russian and Australian meat carries a red stamp, Bulgarian meat has a blue stamp and the local meat has a green stamp (Al Dustour).

London court approves \$1.8 billion BCCI deal

LONDON (R) — London's High Court Monday approved a \$1.8 billion compensation package agreed between Abu Dhabi and liquidators and creditors of the collapsed Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) S.A.

The decision is the first of three approvals needed before liquidators Touche Ross can proceed with the compensation deal hammered out in October with majority shareholder Abu Dhabi.

At the end of the brief hearing, Judge Richard Scott brushed aside objections from former BCCI employees.

"I've come to the conclusion that I should give the liquidators the authority to proceed," he told the court.

BCCI, which once had assets of \$24 billion and operations in 71 countries, was closed down in September 1991 after estimated losses of some \$10 billion in the

world's largest banking fraud.

"It's another hurdle crossed," Fred Goodwin, a partner at BCCI liquidators Touche Ross told Reuters after the hearing.

"We hope (the courts in) Luxembourg and the Cayman Islands will come to the same conclusion," Mr. Goodwin said.

A Luxembourg court is mulling whether to give the go-ahead for the compensation package after a hearing earlier this month, which also saw employee objections.

A decision is expected on Jan. 12, the same date the third and last hearing is due to start in the Cayman Islands.

BCCI was registered in all three jurisdictions.

Under the terms of the \$1.8 billion deal, Abu Dhabi is to pay \$1.55 billion immediately after court approval.

of \$150 million 24 months later and \$100 million 12 months after that.

The deal is the second to

come before the courts after a previous deal was thrown out in Luxembourg last year. This time round, however,

all the main creditor representatives have approved the package and are not objecting.

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ORGANISED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 20/12/1994			
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED	PREV. CLOSING PRICE
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	284336	1144179	4.430
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK	1809	2780	1.550
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	3125	9304	2.980
THE HOUSING BANK	500	2710	5.450
JORDAN KIMATY BANK	1535	4618	3.010
JORDAN GULF BANK	3600	5904	1.640
ARAB JORDAN INVESTMENT BANK	500	1850	3.700
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	5626	20475	3.650
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	150	729	4.900
BEIT KHALIL SAVINGS INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	2850	8898	3.130
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	4250	6418	1.510
PELLADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	4150	7002	1.690
BANKS SECTOR			
JORDAN FRENCH INSURANCE	300	738	2.520
YAMOUK INSURANCE & REINSURANCE	500	1525	3.050
INSURANCE SECTOR			
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	4750	7315	1.550
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER / NEW	3050	4606	1.520
IRBID DISTRICT ELECTRICITY	500	675	1.400
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	350	1103	3.200
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	2200	5310	2.430
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	500	675	1.400
JORDAN GULF REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	1200	1516	1.300
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL TRADING CENTER	1000	1070	1.070
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & CONCORDIA HOTELS	14000	34035	2.450
ARAB YATRA FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	1900	6385	3.350
JORDANIAN EXPATRIATES INVESTMENT HOLDING	800	1092	1.350
SERVICES SECTOR			
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JORDAN PROSPECTIVE MINES	6050	16801	2.780
THE ARAB POTASH / NEW	250	1288	5.100
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	288	2563	8.900
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	295	1369	4.660
THE JORDAN WORTED MILLS	2100	16590	7.950
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	11609	6344	5.500
JORDAN DAIRY	1000	2370	2.370
THE JORDAN PIPES MANUFACTURING	400	1128	2.860
DAR AL DANAH DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	2100	36035	17.250
ARAB INVESTMENT & INTERNATIONAL TRADE	14900	14900	1.010
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY	362	2533	7.000
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	10951	9281	8.500
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	1700	2378	1.390
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	1500	4338	2.910
JORDAN ROCHMOOL INDUSTRIES	1450	2241	1.560
JORDAN INDUSTRIES & MATCH/JINCO	500	420	840
JORDAN SULPHO-CHEMICALS	12550	25095	2.000
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	3400	9323	2.750
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	3100	12836	4.190
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	8000	5300	2.640
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR			
GRAND TOTAL	393158	1522525	128.17
NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET			
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET			

Financial Markets			
in co-operation with			
Cairo Amman Bank			
U.S. Dollar in International Markets			
Currency	New York Close	Tokyo Close	
	19/12/94	20/12/94	
sterling pound	1.5603	1.5593**	
Deutsche Mark	1.5735	1.5728	
Swiss Franc	1.5325	1.5316**	
French Franc	5.4210	5.4245**	
Japanese Yen	100.12	100.19	
European Currency Unit	1.2110	1.2111**	
* 100 Per Cent			
** European Clearing for 100 units, 100%			
Eurocurrency Interest Rates			
Currency	1 MTH	3 MTH	6 MTH
U.S. Dollar	5.87	6.12	6.62
sterling pound	5.75	6.12	6.68
Deutsche Mark	5.18	5.18	5.25
Swiss Franc	3.75	4.00	4.25
French Franc	5.37	5.87	6.18
Japanese Yen	2.18	2.18	2.31
European Currency Unit	6.18	6.37	6.62
Interest rates for 100 units, 100% or equivalent.			
Precious Metals			
Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Oz	
Gold	380.50	7.60	
Silver	4.81	0.105	
* 100 Per Cent			
Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin			
Currency	Bid	Offer	
U.S. Dollar	0.7020	0.7040	
sterling pound	1.0943	1.0998	
Deutsche Mark	0.4459	0.4481	
Swiss Franc	0.5571	0.5597	
French Franc	0.1294	0.1300	
Japanese Yen	0.6999	0.7034	
Dutch Guilder	0.3983	0.4003	
Swedish Krona	0.0426	0.0428	
Italian Lira	0.0426	0.0428	
Belgian Franc	0.0426	0.0428	
* Per 100			
Other Currencies			
Currency	Bid	Offer	
Baharai Dinar	1.8460	1.8620	
Lebanese Lira	0.041225	0.041580	
Saudi Riyal	0.1860	0.1879	
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3030	2.3600	
Qatari Riyal	0.1916	0.1929	
Egyptian Pound	0.2000	0.2150	
Omani Riyal	1.8460	1.8240	
UAE Dirham	0.1905	0.1915	
Greek Drachma	0.2835	0.3185	
Cypriot Pound	1.4930	1.5370	
* Per 100			

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES			
Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London Foreign Exchange and bullion markets Tuesday.			
U.S. \$1.00 costs	1.3938/48	Canadian dollar	1.5724/34
	1.7594/04	Deutsche marks	1.3306/16
	32.32/36	Dutch guilders	32.32/36
	5.4218/68	Swiss francs	1649.80/8
	100.18/28	Belgian francs	7.5275/75
	6.8670/20	French francs	6.1724/74
	1.5596/06	Italian lire	1.4930/30
One sterling	380.45/380.95	Japanese yen	1.4930/30
One ounce of gold		Swedish crowns	1.4930/30
		Norwegian crowns	1.4930/30
		Danish crowns	1.4930/30

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		Danish crowns	1.4930/30

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Qatar may borrow up to \$980 million for gas project

DUBAI (R) — Qatar has decided to stick to its original plan to borrowing \$680 million for a major gas project and will probably come back later for another loan of up to \$300 million to fund an expansion, bankers said Tuesday.

The financing is one of the biggest planned in the entire Gulf region.

Qatar Liquefied Gas Co. (Qatargas) had mandated, through its financial advisers J.P. Morgan and Co., a group of four banks to syndicate a \$680 million loan for the upstream work on the multi-billion dollar project. It then considered increasing the amount since Qatargas' planned capacity is being raised to six million tonnes a year from four million after new Japanese clients were signed up.

"They would like to increase the amount because of increased capacity, but given the fact that that would have delayed the process, it was decided to arrange the original loan of \$680 million and then an extra \$300 million," one said.

Another banker said the second portion might be somewhat less than \$300 million, adding that the size had not been fixed.

Qatargas is the more advanced of two multi-billion dollar liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects on which Qatar is relying to supplement its small oil income.

The bankers said syndication of the \$680 million loan will probably not start until February or March of 1995.

The four banks, together with five that had formed an underwriting group, had been ready to go to the market for syndication in late September before Qatargas decided to increase the project's capacity. The bankers said the dura-

tion of the loan would probably be between 10 and 12 years.

They said export credit agencies from France, Britain, Germany and Italy were involved in negotiations on guaranteeing probably half the loan.

"There is active involvement by export credit agencies. It has not been finalised but the idea is they will guarantee half or something in that region and the rest comes from the project. This is still under discussion," one said.

Qatargas as a whole is likely to cost \$6 billion or \$7 billion. The upstream portion — getting the gas out of the ground and to the plant that liquefies it — is estimated to cost roughly \$1.3 billion.

Qatari Energy Minister Abdullah Bin Hamad Al Attiyah concluded a \$2 billion loan in June for the downstream portion.

Bankers had said the expansion of the project strengthened since revenues would rise by 50 per cent while costs would go up by less than 50 per cent.

The initial four million tonnes a year will be sold to Japan's Chubu Electric Power Co. under a 25-year deal.

The banks that won the upstream financing mandate are France's Credit Lyonnais and Societe Generale, Barclay's PLC and the Bahrain-based Gulf International Bank.

Upstream, the state's Qatar General Petroleum Corp (QGPC) owns 65 per cent of Qatargas. Total S.A. has 20 per cent, Mobil Corp 10 per cent and Japan's Marubeni Corp and Mitsui and Co. each 2.5 per cent.

Downstream, Total has 10 per cent and Marubeni and Mitsui each 7.5 per cent, with the other shares constant.

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FORMULA ONE 1994

After the party, spare a thought for the dead

PARIS (AFP) — Michael Schumacher may be celebrating, but most motor racing fans will remember 1994 not for the living, but for the dead.

When Ayrton Senna died in a Bologna hospital room on May 1, following a 200mph crash at Imola, the sport lost arguably the greatest driver ever to sit behind the wheel of a Formula One car.

Not only did he win three world titles in four years (1988-1991), but his breathtaking speed and swashbuckling style made him an idol for literally millions of fans.

Nigel Mansell, Britain's 1992 world champion, said: "Ayrton and I shared some of the most exciting races ever staged and it is impossible to put into words what a sad loss this is to motor racing."

Stirling Moss added: "Ayrton was in a class of his own."

Senna knew intuitively how to take a racing car to the limit, and sometimes beyond, whatever the conditions. Critics called him arrogant, others said the Brazilian simply knew how good he was and did not

suffer fools gladly. His death, the details of which are still shrouded in mystery, has robbed the sport of its soul.

The crash on the Tamburello bend, a day after Austrian Roland Ratzenberger became the first driver to be killed on a circuit for 12 years, also shattered the illusion that F1 cars were no longer killers.

As if further proof were needed, another Austrian driver, Karl Wendlinger, hovered between life and death after crashing in practice for the very next race, the Monaco Grand Prix.

Miraculously, he emerged from the coma and hopes to return to F1 next year.

Other men to escape serious injury in 1994 were Brazil's Rubens Barrichello — whose car literally took off after clipping the kerb at Imola — and Dutchman Jos Verstappen, whose Benetton was suddenly engulfed in flames during a pit-stop at Hockenheim.

Faced with the horror, everyone in the sport looked for action, and some for someone to blame.

Not surprisingly, the man

most frequently in the dock was Britain's Max Mosley, head of the ruling International Automobile Federation, who promptly announced a raft of changes to improve safety.

The only bright spot in one of the blackest years in motor racing history was the triumph of Schumacher, after a contrived battle with Senna's teammate at Williams Renault, Damon Hill.

Schumacher may not be Senna, but the hugely talented German looks certain to dominate the sport in the coming years.

He is fast, ambitious and has the backing of an equally determined team in Flavio Briatore's Benetton.

The former Mercedes sportscar driver won eight races in 1994 — but was disqualified or banned from four more — sending the title race down to the wire at Adelaide.

A Schumacher shunt, the kind which had previously decided titles for Senna and Alain Prost, meant that neither German nor Englishman finished the race and the championship was won by a single point.



The late Ayrton Senna who died May 1 after crashing at the Imola circuit.

Hill's comment that there was no point shedding tears for a driver whose car is illegal (after Schumacher was disqualified in Belgium for a wooden panel beneath his car being a few millimetres too thin) pricked his rival.

Dubbing Hill "a little man," Schumacher launched into a diatribe which included "Hill has been thrown into the job of being number one. He was never a number one. David Coulthard (his Williams teammate) was quicker than him after three races."

For his part, the son of late world champion Graham Hill did everything that could reasonably be expected of him in a traumatic season. Even when he drove well, and won, he was taunted by his critics — once prompting a diatribe of his own.

"I came closer to beating Schumacher than anyone else all year other than Ayrton Senna, and all I'm reading in the papers is that my job is in jeopardy. I've never heard

such a lot of bollocks in all my life as I have this past week," he fumed before winning the British Grand Prix.

Next season, the two rivals will meet again — both their contracts having been confirmed for 1995 — with the subtle difference that both will be using the same Renault V10 engine. Benetton have dumped Ford.

There are questionmarks over their teammates, though.

Williams must choose between the old and the new. Between 41-year-old Mansell, who returned for the last three races of the season and won in Adelaide, and the promising 23-year-old Coulthard.

McLaren, also changing engine suppliers next season after ditching Peugeot for Mercedes, are meanwhile anxious to sign Coulthard as partner for Finn Mika Hakkinen.

Ferrari will stick by luckless Frenchman Jean Alesi, still waiting for his first victory, and Austrian veteran Gerhard Berger, who broke a four-year barren spell for the Prancing Horse with victory in Germany.

Whatever else happens, fans and drivers alike will be praying for a season's safe driving in 1995.

Thrills on the fast bends, excitement at the chequered flag and a world championship battle that goes right to the end.

Something to erase the memory of a warm, sunny day at Imola. And the sight of Ayrton Senna, as he lay dying amidst the wreckage of his car.

Edberg splits with coach after 11 years

LONDON (R) — Sweden's Stefan Edberg announced Tuesday that he was splitting up with his coach of 11 years, Tony Pickard.

"We have had a great relationship over the years, right from the time we met in 1983," Edberg, winner of 40 titles including six Grand Slam tournaments, said.

"This year, like every year, we've sat down and reviewed the future, and I feel now it is perhaps time for me to go on — on my own," the 28-year-old Swede added.

"I'm not looking for anyone else as a coach. I'm going on my own which I've pretty much done this year anyway except for the Grand Slams," Edberg said.

Pickard, a former British Davis Cup player and team captain, said: "We've enjoyed a long and unbelievable relationship in tennis and we shall always be pals. I know well enough that, when it comes to the crunch, it's the player who has to do it."

Sanchez targets Wimbledon and world No. 1 spot

HONG KONG (AFP) — Arantxa Sanchez Vicario is not only aiming to make 1995 the year she becomes world number one. The Spanish tennis star is also going to start a concerted campaign on Wimbledon.

The 23-year-old queen of clay court tennis said Tuesday: "I used to think that grass was for cows when I played on it."

But having won the French and U.S. Opens this year and reached the Australian Open final, Sanchez has now changed her mind. "It is the only Grand Slam event where I have not got past the quarter finals. I want to try and see if 1995 can be a better year," she told AFP.

Sanchez, who won the world champion title last week, said she would adapt more of her game to the fast

grass courts of Wimbledon. She put down her desire to play on more varied surfaces to her new coach Gabriel Etcheberry.

"I now play on different surfaces, such as hard court. I feel I am a more aggressive player," she commented.

The other goal for the Spaniard, who will be appearing in the First Bank Pacific Challenge tournament in Hong Kong at the start of January as part of her build up for the 1995 Australian Open, is to knock Steffi Graf off the top spot in the women's world rankings.

Though many experts say the revolution will not take long, Sanchez said she was not setting a date for topping Graf.

"I am just thinking that I still have a couple of things in my game that I have to work on."



Brazilian team captain Dunga (centre) holds the World Cup trophy as he runs with teammates after defeating Italy in the final (AFP photo)

Brazil team of the year

ZURICH (AFP) — Brazil ended the year as the world's top football side, according to governing body FIFA's standings.

The World Cup winners take over from last year's winners Germany.

Spain pipped Sweden and World Cup finalists Italy for second places as European sides took eight out of the top ten spots.

The biggest improvement of the year came from Croatia, recent conquerors of Italy in the European Championship qualifiers, who shot up from 122nd in the world to 60th.

Jack Charlton's Republic of Ireland came in a superb ninth while England ended up in 18th as Britain's best team. Asian interest centred on Japan in 36th place and China in 40th.

Standings:	
1. Brazil	67.18 points
2. Espagne	61.80
3. Sweden	61.41
4. Italy	61.35
5. Germany	61.25
6. Netherlands	59.91
7. Switzerland	58.30
8. Norway	58.11
9. Republic of Ireland	57.63
10. Argentina	56.67

Indian Christmas Celebration

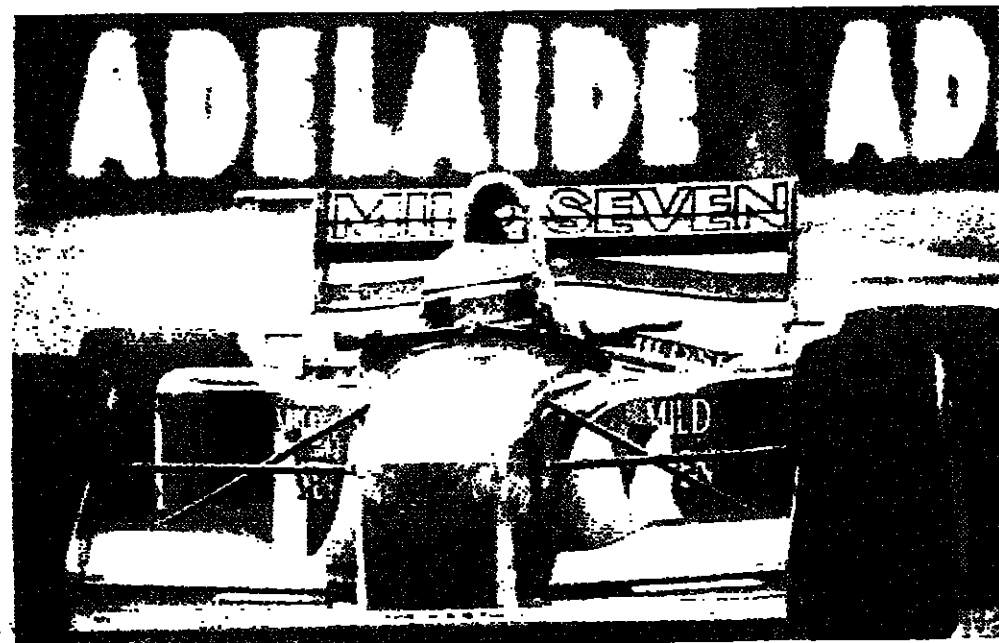
The Indian community living in Jordan celebrates Christmas on Dec. 23, Friday, between 3 and 6 p.m. at the Regency Palace Hotel. All members of the Indian Cultural Association are welcome.

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A building is up for sale. Consisting of 3 floors, area of each floor 270 sq. m. and area 611 sq. m. The building is located in Abu Firas Al Hamadani Street which is parallel to Khaldi Hospital Street, close to Hala Inn Hotel. The building is suitable for doctors' clinics and laboratories. Price: JD 270,000.

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World champion Michael Schumacher in his Benetton-Ford at the Australian GP (AFP photo)

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The Azraq Oasis Conservation Project is in need to fill in the post of Sub-Project Manager, Azraq Wetland Reserve. The applicant should have the following qualifications and experience:

The minimum qualification should be a university degree in one of the natural sciences and at least 10 years' work experience in the management of wetland reserves, environmental sciences or marine biology. The Sub-Project Manager should have considerable experience in providing on-the-job training, and should have sound reporting skills. Proficiency in English is essential, and a working knowledge of Arabic would be an advantage.

Interested candidates can send their CVs to the following address within a period not exceeding 28/12/1994:

Azraq Oasis Conservation Project
P.O.Box 6354
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Or to Fax: (830726).

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Please send CV to P.O.Box 146, Amman 11953 - Attention General Manager. Alternatively call between 2-3 p.m. for appointment.

The Azraq Oasis Conservation Project is seeking to employ national or international Wetland Conservation Specialist, the applicant should have the following qualifications and experience:

The minimum qualification should be an advance degree in one of the biological sciences and at least 10 years work experience in the study, management and/or conservation of natural wetland ecosystems.

Interested candidates should send their CV's before the 30th of December 1994 to the following address:

Att: National Coordinator/Project Manager
Azraq Oasis Conservation Project
P.O.Box (6354) Amman-Jordan
Fax: 830726

Or to the headquarters of the Project stationed at the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature.

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The American embassy in Amman is looking for a professional translator. Successful candidate must have excellent knowledge of both Arabic and English and be able to translate into fluent, idiomatic English. University degree in translation/liberal arts — or degree and several years of professional translation experience is required. Candidate must have good working knowledge of current affairs and be able to work under pressure with precision and speed. Day and evening shift work, including weekends and holidays, is required. Candidates must take extensive tests in translation and have knowledge of world events. Only qualified applicants need apply. Previous applicants need not reapply.

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	Presents: A world famed movie picture worth watching: THE FLINTSTONES Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Michel York/Jennifer O'Neill — in DISCRETION ASSURED Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 5:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	CONCORD '1' Robin Williams — in Mrs. Doubtfire Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30 CONCORD '2' Harrison Ford — in The Fugitive Shows: 3:15, 5:00	will soon present: Mousa Hijazin (SUM'AA) in the satirical political comedy: Hi Citizen	The theatre is closed on Mondays Tickets are available all day	Presents: The political satire: Al Salam Ya Salam Daily at 8:30 Saturday & Sunday is the theatre's holiday. in English Sundays December 11-12

Jazireh take on Faisali as 15th week kicks off

By Aileen Bannayan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The results of the upcoming 15th week of the Jordan Soccer Championship may well affect the standings of most teams as the second round of the competition nears its half-way point with the top three teams only a point apart.

Leaders Al Hussein are set to improve their record further when they meet last-placed Al Jeel. Meanwhile, second-placed Al Wihdat face Al Qadissieh who crushed Al Ahli 4-1 last week but still need more wins to secure their place in the division.

Al Ramtha meet sixth placed ambitious newcomers Kufroum who moved up to sixth place after beating Al Jeel and Shabab Al Hussein in their last two matches.

The most interesting match will be the Faisali-Jazireh clash as both strive for an advanced standing. Al Arabi who upset titleholders Al Faisali 1-0 are still in ninth place and have an important match against 11 placed Al Karmel. Meanwhile, Al Ahli need to beat Shabab Al Hussein to secure a halfway standing at the least after the team's inconsistent performance proved that they are in no form to seek a more ambitious standing this year.

Twenty one goals were scored in the past week, the second highest number after 22 in the seventh week of the first round.

The 14th week will be remembered for its surprising results including Al Faisali's 1-0 loss to Al Arabi, Al Ramtha's 5-2 win over Al Jazireh and Al Qadissieh's 4-1 victory over Al Ahli.

Al Qadissieh vs. Al Ahli: The win was Al Qadissieh's

fourth and raised their points to 12. However they are still in danger of moving back to the last four which will be relegated. The result of their upcoming match against former champions Al Wihdat will be crucial.

Scorers: Amjad Yousef (28th), Ismail Awadat (28th), Munir Abu Hantash (73rd) and Thaeir Saleh (84th) for Al Qadissieh and Mousa Shteyan (40th) for Al Ahli.

Al Wihdat vs. Al Karmel: Al Wihdat continued their unbeaten streak but are still one point behind Al Hussein. Over 4,000 fans watched their match against Al Karmel despite cold and rainy weather.

Scorers: Ibrahim Sa'diyeh (3rd) and Mohammad Abdul Dayem (88th).

Al Faisali vs. Al Arabi: Al Faisali's defeat shocked their fans. The result may well affect their pursuit of a third consecutive title.

Al Arabi's top striker Ayman Al Omari scored the precious goal for his team in the 82nd minute.

Al Ramtha vs. Al Jazireh: Al Ramtha put an end to Al Jazireh's string of

impressive results with an impressive score of their own that kept them in third place, one point behind Al Wihdat.

Scorers: Salim Diyab (13th), Farid Shananeh (31st and 89th), Mouaffaq Abu Hdeib (41st), and Khaled Aqqouri (78th) for Al Ramtha and Ahmad Rashed (63rd) and Simon Kheir (81st) for Al Jazireh.

Kufroum vs. Al Jeel: Kufroum's 2-0 win put them back in sixth place, and they are the only newcomer not among the last four.

Al Jeel remained last with a sole win over Shabab Al Hussein at the beginning of the second round.

Scorers: Yousef Obaidat (49th) and Ihab Qawasmeh (90th).

Al Hussein vs. Shabab Al Hussein: The 3-1 loss further complicated Shabab Al Hussein's position as they languish in 10th place and seem destined to be relegated with only one win.

Scorers: Aref Hussein (24th and 36th), Mazen Anbar (57th) for Al Hussein, and Mohammad Fatout (57th) for Shabab Al Hussein.

Standings after 10th week

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts.
Hussein	14	11	2	1	38	12	24
Wihdat	14	9	5	1	16	3	23
Ramtha	14	9	4	1	29	7	22
Faisali	14	6	6	2	22	8	18
Jazireh	14	7	3	4	19	14	17
Kufroum	14	7	1	6	23	23	15
Ahli	14	4	5	5	16	20	13
Qadissieh	14	4	4	6	18	21	12
Arabi	14	4	3	7	15	26	11
Shabab Al Hussein	14	1	3	10	17	32	5
Karmel	14	1	3	10	10	33	5
Jeel	14	1	1	12	8	32	3

NBA stars take world gold

TORONTO (AFP) — Reggie Miller watched his Dream Team teammates celebrate their gold medal triumph here at the World Basketball Championship and smiled.

"This was special," the Indiana Pacers' guard said. "You don't get many chances to play with such a great collection of players."

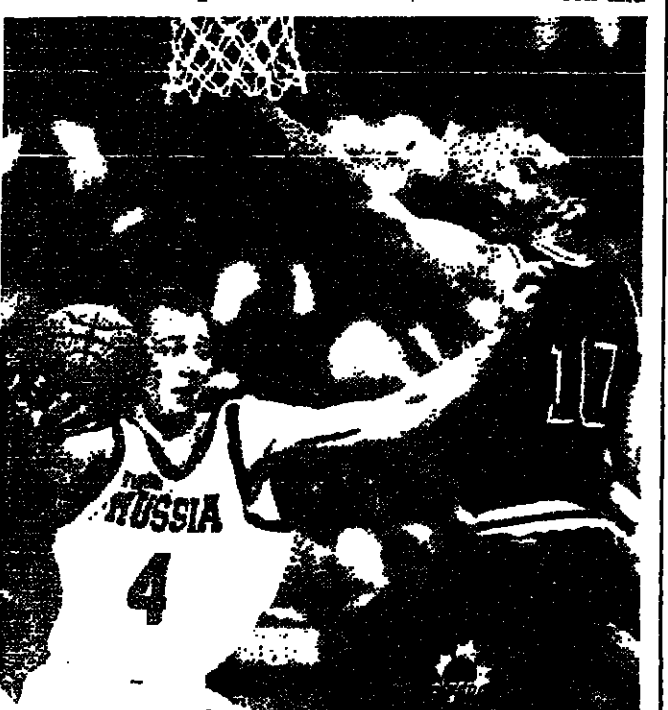
Miller and his fellow National Basketball Association (NBA) colleagues dominated the 16-team tournament in August as the

unbeaten US club rolled to the title, beating Russia 137-91 in the final.

Orlando center Shaquille O'Neal dominated the event with 18 points and 8.5 rebounds a game, sparking a group of young NBA stars who were constantly compared to the original Dream Team, which won the 1992 Olympic crown.

Other members of the U.S. roster included Seattle's Shawn Kemp, Detroit's Joe Dumars, Kevin Johnson and

Dan Majerle of Phoenix, New Jersey's Derrick Coleman, Miami's Steve Smith, Charlotte's Larry Johnson, Cleveland's Mark Prince and Boston's Dominique Wilkins.



Vasili Kerashev of Russia (left) passes the ball past Cory Hallas of Canada during their World Basketball Championship game (AFP photo)

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Q
Void
A K Q 8 7 6 2
WEST
A Void
A K 10 8 5 4 3 2
Q 9 8 6
J 3
SOUTH
A Q 9 2
J 7 3
J 7 6 4 3 2
Void
The bidding:
West North East South
1 2 3 4
Pass 3 4 6 6
Pass Pass Pass
Opening lead: King of ♣
We have reached the stage where nothing that happens at the bridge table surprises us. When this hand was played in a team match, the contract at one table was a minor suit partscore; at the other, a major suit slam!
At the first table West opened one heart. North overcalled two clubs and that was passed back to West. With the whole spade suit missing and the enemy marked for most of the strength, West, fully alert to the dangers of further competition, passed and North raked in 11 tricks, losing a heart and a club.
At the other table North chose a Michaels cue-bid of two hearts, showing spades and an undisclosed minor suit. South made an invitational jump to three spades and, when West revealed a red two-suit, North took a shot at the spade slam.
West led the king of hearts and the fate of the contract hung in the balance. To prevail, the defenders had to force dummy to ruff. Unfortunately, West chose to do so by continuing with the ace of hearts. That set up declarer's jack as the fulfilling trick.
Declarer ruffed and came to hand with a trump to the ace, revealing the bad break. The jack of hearts was cashed, dummy was entered with a diamond ruff and the top clubs were cleared. When these lived, declarer ruffed a club low in hand and a diamond in dummy. A high crossruff followed, declarer scoring in all three club tricks, one heart, three diamond ruffs and a heart ruff in dummy and four trumps in the closed hand.

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Stoichkov voted European Footballer of Year

PARIS (AFP) — Hristo Stoichkov was voted 1994 European Footballer of the Year Monday, in recognition of the powerful striker's contribution to club and country, Barcelona and Bulgaria.

The 28-year-old became the 39th winner of the France Football magazine award, which is based on sports journalists' votes in all 49 European countries, picking up 210 points.

Second and third places both went to members of Italy's World Cup final side — Juventus striker Roberto Baggio, who polled 136 points, and AC Milan defender Paolo Maldini, who netted 109.

Baggio might have kept his crown, had he not blasted his penalty over the bar in the World Cup final shoot-out against Brazil.

Sweden's Tomas Brolin and Romanian George Hagi were voted joint fourth.

Stoichkov's goals helped Bulgaria to the World Cup semi-finals and have also established a place for Barcelona, alongside AC Milan, at the top of European football in the 1990s.

In the United States, he became the World Cup's joint top scorer with six goals, alongside Russia's Oleg Salenko.

In total, he has found the back of the net 24 times in 52 international appearances — no mean achievement for a player whose shooting ability is restricted to a single foot, his left.

Whether it is club or country, Stoichkov's trademarks are speed and aggression, a combination which recently ripped through Manchester United's defence in the 4-0

humiliation at Nou Camp in the European Champions League.

Prized by the Catalan fans, he has been a key figure in Barcelona's domestic and European success under Johan Cruyff — consecutive Spanish league titles for the past four seasons, one European Cup title in 1992 and a place in last season's final, when they were hammered 4-0 by AC Milan.

Often ill-tempered on the field, Stoichkov is equally outspoken off it.

In 1992, believing that he deserved the Footballer of the Year award which went instead narrowly to AC Milan's Dutch striker Marco Van Basten, Stoichkov accused Silvio Berlusconi, AC Milan's president and owner of a television empire, of exerting his media influence over the judges.

Berlusconi is currently Italy's embattled prime minister.

Meanwhile, the France Football award was a sad reflection on the state of British football — not a single player born there shaded the top 15.

Only two English clubs were represented among the elite — Tottenham Hotspur through German striker Jurgen Klinsmann (voted sixth) and Manchester United with Frenchman Eric Cantona (joint 13th).

Stoichkov's profile:

Hristo Stoichkov. Born Feb. 8, 1966 at Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

Clubs: CSKA Sofia, Barcelona.

Achievements: Won Bulgarian championship with CSKA 1987, 1989, 1990. Bulgarian Cup 1987, 1988.



Barcelona's Bulgarian striker Hristo Stoichkov and teammates Albert Ferrer and Ronald Koeman celebrate their 4-0 thrashing of Man. United after their Champions League match (AFP photo)

1989. Bulgarian Supercup 1989. Europe's Golden Boot Award 1990. Won Spanish Championship with Barcelona 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994. Spanish Supercup 1992. European Supercup 1992. European Cup 1992. Finalist in European Cup 1994. Fourth place in 1994 World Cup.

"It's a childhood dream come true," said a delighted winner, who was joined by his coach Cruyff for the television presentation of the award.

The 49 judges also named a "Golden Team" for 1994: Goalkeeper: Thomas Ravelli (Sweden, IFK Gothenburg)

Defenders: Paolo Maldini (Italy, AC Milan), Marcel Desailly (France, AC Milan).

Philippe Albert (Belgium, Newcastle United). Midfielders: Tomas Brolin (Sweden, Parma), Jari Litmanen (Finland, Ajax Amsterdam), Yordan Letchkov (Bulgaria, SV Hamburg).

George Hagi (Romania, Barcelona), Roberto Baggio (Italy, Juventus).

Forwards: Jurgen Klinsmann (Tottenham Hotspur), Hristo Stoichkov (Barcelona).

Past 15 winners

- 1979 — Kevin Keegan, Hamburg SV
- 1980 — Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, Bayern Munich
- 1981 — Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, Bayern Munich
- 1982 — Paolo Ruzsi, Juventus of Turin
- 1983 — Michel Platini, Juventus of Turin
- 1984 — Michel Platini, Juventus of Turin
- 1985 — Michel Platini, Juventus of Turin
- 1986 — Igor Belanov, Dynamo Kiev
- 1987 — Ruud Gullit, AC Milan
- 1988 — Marco Van Basten, AC Milan
- 1989 — Marco Van Basten, AC Milan
- 1990 — Lothar Matthaus, Internazionale of Milan
- 1991 — Jean-Pierre Papin, Olympique Marseille
- 1992 — Marco Van Basten, AC Milan
- 1993 — Roberto Baggio, Juventus.

Salt Lake City moves ahead in 2002 bid race

GENEVA (R) — The American city of Salt Lake City was marked out Tuesday as clear favourite in the race to host the 2002 Winter Games, winning high praise in a preliminary report from the International Olympic Committee.

Salt Lake, which narrowly lost out to Nagano, Japan, for the 1998 Games, was one of nine candidates visited by the IOC's evaluation commission in the run-up to next

June's vote.

The other eight were Quebec City, Canada, Sweden's Ostersund, the Swiss city of Sion, Graz in Austria, Jaca of Spain, Tarvisio of Italy, Poprad-Tatry of Slovakia and the Russian Black Sea town of Sochi.

The commission's 192-page report makes no direct comparison between individual cities, but praises the Utah

state capital on virtually all aspects of its bid and declares its financial plan to be "an excellent one."

Ostersund and Quebec City also received good reviews but the commission was unexpectedly critical of the bid by Sion — another frontrunner — and said problems had to be settled with Graz's financial plan before it could prudently be accepted.

Praise from the 12-member commission is seen as crucial to a city's chances of staying in the frame when the IOC's executive board whittles the candidates down to a shortlist of four in Lausanne next month.

The final decision will be made by the IOC's full membership at a meeting in Budapest in June.

At least two cities, Poprad-

Tatry and Sochi, appear to be out of the running already — both were criticised for risky and unrealistic financial projections. Jaca and Tarvisio also received unenthusiastic reports.

After the success this year of the "Green and white games" of Lillehammer, environment is a key consideration and the Slovakian bid also fell down on that score.

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Jordan asks Israel to allow return of Palestinians with 'expired' permits

AMMAN (AP) — Jordan has asked Israel to allow the repatriation of 80,000 Palestinians who were denied entry to the Israeli occupied territories because of expired exit-and-return permits, a Jordanian official said Tuesday.

Marwan Dudin, head of a committee for talks with Israel on refugees, said he presented the Israeli with a "provisional list of 6,250 names as a first step towards the repatriation of all Palestinians in that category."

He told the Associated Press that the Jordanian list was presented to the Israelis at the fringes of a five-day discussion on Palestinian refugees that opened in Paris Nov. 20.

"There is an (Israeli) approval in principle" of the Jordanian request, but no formal decision has been conveyed to the Kingdom, he said.

Mr. Dudin said in view of the peace treaty Jordan signed with Israel on Oct. 26, "we hope that the Israelis will

show their good intention and endorse the Jordanian request."

"It is not fair to deny these people their national right of return to their homeland using the excuse of an expired exit-and-return permit," Mr. Dudin said. "These people are citizens of the territories and it is not appropriate to have an expiry date for a return permit in one's native homeland."

Mr. Dudin, who also chaired a round of regional talks on refugees in Turkey last week, said the Israelis agreed to double the number of applications for Palestinian family reunification to 2,000.

"The Israelis accepted to increase the number of applications from 1,000 to 2,000 on condition that the total number of individuals would not exceed 6,000," he said.

"It is a good step in the right direction."

Mr. Dudin said that Jordan had also accepted plans to convene a meeting on refugees with Israel, Egypt and the Palestinians.

Previously, the Kingdom rejected such a meeting because it was called for by the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Israel in their Sept. 13, 1993 agreement on interim Palestinian autonomy worked out in secret without Jordanian participation.

The status of Palestinians who fled in 1967 will be determined in negotiations between Israel and the PLO slated for 1996. The number of Palestinians in this category is nearly 900,000, more than 95 per cent of them living in Jordan.

The fate of Palestinian refugees from the 1948 war is not part of the negotiations.

A self-described human rights activist and lawyer on Monday said she had been hired by individual Palestinian expellees to pursue their cases with Israeli authorities in an effort to return them to their homes.

Lea Isemel, 49, said her mission was made possible by the Oct. 26 peace treaty between Israel and Jordan.

"I decided that the political development was a good opportunity not only for people to make business, but also for human rights activists to come and try and bring forward some improvement in Palestinian human rights," Ms. Isemel said.

"The idea now is how to use the peace process between Israel and the Arabs in order to bring all these people back to their homes," the pro-Palestinian lawyer said.

There are about 2,000 Palestinians who were expelled from Israel to Jordan in the past three decades.

Of those nearly 400 were repatriated under the September 1993 Israel-PLO accord that paved the way for partial Palestinian autonomy.

Jordanian officials said Ms. Isemel's visit was a private one and that the government was not involved.

Ms. Isemel, a resident of Jerusalem, declined to say how many Palestinian expellees had hired her to pursue their cases with Israeli authorities.

Israel says it could hit Lebanese villages

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israel warned Tuesday it could exact revenge on villages in South Lebanon for guerrilla attacks in which two of its soldiers were killed.

Deputy Defence Minister Mordechai Gur accused the Iranian-backed Hizbollah of "flagrant provocation by firing on our soldiers from inhabited Shiite villages."

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Israel would not let its peace negotiations with Syria and Lebanon stand in the way of any military operations in South Lebanon.

Mr. Peres told Israeli radio: "No peace negotiations can ever prevent or hold up defence measures aimed at protecting our tranquility."

"Action to safeguard our security will be implemented as necessary," he added after right-wing accusations that the government held off attacks on Hizbollah to avoid conflict with Syria.

On Monday, an officer and a soldier were killed in Israel's self-declared "security zone" in South Lebanon in attacks carried out by Hizbollah and Palestinian guerrillas.

Mr. Gur also said that Hizbollah may have violated U.S.-brokered understandings by using civilian villages in South Lebanon as bases for shelling Israeli forces.

He said firing from villages beyond the "security zone" would constitute an "unequivocal provocation."

Sabbah urges U.N. guarantees for Christian rights in Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — The top Roman Catholic churchman in the Holy Land on Tuesday urged Israel to lift restrictions on Palestinians visiting Jerusalem and called for U.N. guarantees to preserve Christian rights in the city.

Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah, the first Palestinian to head the local church, said that in a time of peacemaking Palestinians should be free to enter to the city which is a focal point of both temporal and religious life.

"Peace should encompass the opening of Jerusalem which is still closed to Christians, Muslims, to all inhabitants of the occupied territories," he said in an interview with the Associated Press.

"Jerusalem is the heart of civil and religious life of the people, and therefore it should not be closed for any reason," said Patriarch Sabbah, 60, an Arabic scholar and former head of Bethlehem University in the West Bank appointed patriarch in 1988.

His statements marked a departure from his patriarchate's traditional reserve on political issues like Jerusalem which is the most explosive issue on the Israeli-Palestinian negotiating agenda.

Most Palestinians, including 50,000 Christians in the West Bank, have been unable to get to East Jerusalem on a regular basis since Israel sealed off the city in March 1993 after a series of attacks on Israelis.

Temporary travel permits to Jerusalem are issued only

to certain groups such as doctors, lawyers, church workers, business owners and journalists, and they are not always renewed depending on the security situation.

Major Elise Shazar, spokeswoman for the Israeli occupation authorities in the West Bank, said thousands of permits have been given to Christians during holidays and maintained no requests have been made for access on a daily basis.

"Requests are made for holidays and special events and are granted," she said.

Patriarch Sabbah said the peace process that in the past year produced autonomy for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and Jericho and a peace treaty with Jordan had improved relations with Israel but not brought meaningful change.

"The criterion is not the signatures or peace treaties. We have had many in the past two years," he said. "Until now, unfortunately, in the daily life of the people there is no peace. There is the same instability: political, military, economic."

He joined 11 other Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Protestant leaders last month in drafting a document that calls for a "special statute" to guarantee Jerusalem remain open and not be subject to the vagaries of daily politics.

"We say that Jerusalem should have a status so that even in time of war everyone would be able to come to Jerusalem," said Patriarch Sabbah.

He said the United Nations should lend its weight by backing demands the city be open at all times.

"Given that Jerusalem has an international dimension, it would be guaranteed by the international community, by the United Nations," he said. Patriarch Sabbah said Christian leaders should join the peace negotiations when the future of Jerusalem is discussed.

The 12 church leaders are also forming a secretariat and plan regular meetings in what is seen as a major drive to overcome differences that have plagued the small community of Christians in the Holy Land.

"The churches will speak, say we are here and say these are the rights of the people. If the political leaders listen to us, okay. If they do not listen, we will keep crying until they do," said Patriarch Sabbah, a senior figure in the Roman Catholic church whose domain includes Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, Cyprus and Jordan.

Yigal Palmor, a foreign ministry spokesman, said security concerns sometimes restricted the movement of people, but Israel's policy was to "maintain free access to all religious sites for Muslims and all denominations of Christians."

He criticised the Christian leaders' declaration on Jerusalem, saying it was a political document that espoused the Palestinian point of view.

"If you read the text carefully, you understand that what it means is no religious freedom for Jerusalem but to take Jerusalem out of the hands of Israel and give it to the Palestinians," Mr. Palmor said.



An unidentified man lies on the ground as two officers train their weapons on him after a shooting incident in front of the north side of the White House Tuesday (AFP photo)

Israeli, Syrian envoys try to break deadlock

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — The Syrian and Israeli ambassadors met in Washington to try to break the deadlock in their peace negotiations, Israeli radio reported Tuesday.

U.S. Middle East coordinator Dennis Ross attended Monday's talks between Israel's Itamar Rabinovich and his Syrian counterpart Walid Muallim.

They were held as Foreign Minister Shimon Peres castigated Syrian President Hafez Al Assad for refusing to hold ministerial-level negotiations and sticking to his demand for a return of all occupied land.

Mr. Peres said the contacts had "no chance of producing results."

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin wants Chief-of-Staff General Ehud Barak, who returns on Jan. 1, to attend the next discussions in Washington, television reported.

This would depend, however, on Syria, which postponed a planned meeting of generals, sending an officer.

The head of the Israeli military intelligence, Uri Saguy, attended one of the Washington meetings a few weeks ago, the daily Yediot Aharonot reported.

Syria suspended its formal negotiations with Israel after the Hebron mosque massacre in February.

Peace moves are deadlocked over the timetable and scale of an Israeli withdrawal from the strategic Golan Heights, the security arrangements that would follow and the kind of relations Syria would be prepared to open with Israel.

Gen. Barak warned in an interview with the latest U.S. News and World Report that "a long stalemate makes another confrontation very probable."

Monday's meeting was "a sign both sides want to reach an agreement," a senior U.S. official said.

Ambassador Muallim returned Monday after two weeks' leave and the talks are expected to resume soon.

"It reflects what we feel is the serious desire of the two sides to come to an agreement," said the senior U.S. official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "And yet, we are not at the point of a breakthrough."

Secretary of State Warren Christopher set up the participation of Israeli and Syrian military experts on a trip to the Middle East two weeks ago.

The National Progressive Front, Syria's highest governing body, Monday underscored charges that Israel was blocking peace in the Middle East by failing to commit itself to a complete withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Israel will discuss nuclear arms after peace — Weizman

CAIRO (Agencies) — Israeli President Ezer Weizman said Tuesday his country was willing to discuss nuclear disarmament after peace is achieved throughout the Middle East.

Mr. Weizman, on a three-day visit to Egypt, was responding to Cairo's urging that Israel take "definite steps" to address Arab concerns about its nuclear capabilities.

Israel, which is widely reported to possess nuclear weapons, refuses to confirm or deny it.

Mr. Weizman said the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which Arabs want Israel to sign, is not an effective guarantee against weapons of mass destruction.

"Iraq was a signatory to the NPT and we had to bomb their reactor," Mr. Weizman told reporters, referring to the June 7, 1981, air strike that took out the French-built Osirak nuclear reactor near Baghdad. Israel alleged Osirak was a key link in Iraq's nuclear weapons programme.

"For the time being we are not going to sign," Mr. Weizman said.

However, he added, when there is peace with all countries in the region, including major military foes Iraq, Libya, Syria and Iran, "then we will talk disarmament in general."

Mr. Weizman called for closer ties with Egypt and other Arab countries, and said peace with Syria was the biggest problem facing the Middle East.

Mr. Weizman began the visit here Monday aimed notably at warming relations with Cairo which have remained frosty despite the two countries' peace treaty signed 15 years ago.

The sheikh said the "climate was wrong because of the continuation of Israeli occupation of Arab countries and Jerusalem," according to Al Hayat daily.

However, Mr. Musa said Monday that Egyptian-Israeli relations were being stepped up and consolidated.

Man shot outside White House

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A U.S. Park policeman shot a knife-wielding man in front of the White House on Tuesday, the third time violence had erupted around the presidential mansion in less than two months, eyewitnesses said.

The man, described by some witnesses as a member of the homeless community who lives in Lafayette Park across from the White House, was reported to be in critical condition with wounds to the chest and right leg.

President Bill Clinton was in the White House but unaffected by the mid-morning incident, which occurred while tensions were high among security officials three days after a gunman fired up to six shots at the building.

Eyewitnesses said the man wounded Tuesday was angered by police controls that had been tightened in recent days. They said he moved toward a group of policemen with a knife or a machete and ignored orders to freeze.

Bruce Lloyd, a 56-year-old psychotherapist from Connecticut, told AFP that police took no chances as they approached the suspect, a black man described variously as in his late 30s, 40s or 50s.

"They just went bang, bang bang," said Mr. Lloyd, adding the police fired at point-black range less than one metre away.

Mr. Lloyd, who was sightseeing with his wife, said the man collapsed immediately on Pennsylvania Avenue where he was surrounded by at least 10 Secret Service agents and park police.

His wife Suzanne, 55, said the shots sparked panic among visitors to the White House and people dove to the ground.

"People were screaming. Children were crying. There was pandemonium," she said. "A Secret Service agent I had been talking to throw me to the ground and screamed at everybody, 'hit the ground and stay down!'"

The wounded man was taken to George Washington University Hospital, where spokesman R. Rodney Brown said he was rushed into surgery in critical condition.

Tensions had been high among security officials around the White House following the shooting incident early Saturday while Mr. Clinton and his family slept at the White House. No one was hurt.

Wade Varner, a pacifist who has maintained a long-standing vigil at the White House, said the victim was one of the homeless people who live in Lafayette Park across from the White House.

He said the man became upset at what he called "hassling" by park policemen in the area since Saturday's incident.

"The man chased the policeman with a long knife until Pennsylvania Avenue," Mr. Varner told AFP. There the man was surrounded by half a dozen policemen and two shots were fired.

"There was a struggle," said Major Robert Hines of the U.S. Park Police. "They told the man to drop his knife two or three times. The man did not drop his knife so he shot him."

COLUMN

Ex-dissident poet wins top Russian literary prize

MOSCOW (R) — Former dissident poet and songwriter Bulat Okudzhava was awarded a top Russian literary prize Monday in a shock win over four much younger writers. The 70-year-old Okudzhava won the Russian Booker Prize worth \$10,000 (\$15,000) with a largely autobiographical work called "a closed-down theatre." The work by Okudzhava, who is half Georgian and half Armenian, attempts to explain why many people were seduced into becoming communists in the first part of this century. Okudzhava, a leading cultural figure in Russia, was not present to receive his prize because of a heart complaint. He was long out of favour with the former Communist authorities. But his work won the approval of reform-minded leaders towards the end of Communist rule in the 1980s and his simple melodies and moving lyrics won him enormous popularity.

U.K. MPs vote for more normal lives

LONDON (R) — British members of parliament, prone to wrecked marriages and exhaustion which many put down to their odd working hours, voted Monday — very late at night — to change them. The House of Commons approved a package of measures to cut down on late-night sittings, which can go on until dawn, and to work less Fridays so they can spend more time with families. The reforms will also curtail the long-winded speeches some members love to make, to the irritation of their colleagues. The Commons sits longer hours than any other Western parliament and on most days only begins at 2:30 p.m. The changes are a concession to legislators who say they should work regular office hours so they can lead relatively normal married lives. They also believe the changes will improve women's representation by making it easier for mothers to stand for parliament. Such legislators say the present hours were suitable when members of parliament were drawn from the cream of the British aristocracy, and the Commons was known as "the best (gentleman's) club in London," but are now outmoded. Opponents say that having the first half of the day free enables legislators to do second jobs, giving the Commons a wide range of experience when discussing proposed legislation. The changes have been introduced for an experimental period initially, until late next year.

'Stunned' Ashkenazy walks out of the RPO

LONDON (AFP) — Vladimir Ashkenazy has walked out of his job as music director of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO), charging that the orchestra had negotiated behind his back to replace him. The Independent newspaper reported Tuesday. After a recording session early last week, Ashkenazy said, he was approached by Paul Findlay, the orchestra's chief executive, who told him he had made an offer to the Italian Daniele Gatti to succeed him. He was too shocked to respond fully and had to rush to catch a plane to Berlin, but the next day he instructed his agent in London, Jasper Parrott, to tell Findlay that he could no longer work with the RPO. "I was stunned and upset when Paul spoke to me," Ashkenazy was quoted as saying from Berlin. "But I controlled myself. I thought I would give myself time to reflect on it when I was alone. The next day I realised this was unacceptable. I really don't understand why they did this. It would have been so simply just to keep me informed." An orchestra spokesman said Monday: "There are discussions going on with the orchestra and Mr. Ashkenazy on the longer-term aspect of our work with him. I am not aware he had left. Discussion is going on about the future of the music director." Ashkenazy, 48, has been associated with the RPO since 1984 and music director since 1990.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Glaspie to head UNRWA in West Bank

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — April Glaspie, U.S. ambassador to Baghdad when Iraqi tanks rolled into Kuwait, is to work for the United Nations Relief Agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), the organisation announced Tuesday. Spokesman Ibrahim Jibril said Ms. Glaspie, a 49-year-old Arabic speaker, would head UNRWA operations in the Israeli-occupied West Bank from January. Ms. Glaspie was accused at the time of leading Iraq's President Saddam Hussein, in a meeting just days before Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait, to believe Washington would not intervene if Iraqi troops moved against the emirate. The former ambassador has denied the charge, saying she stressed the United States wanted a peaceful solution. After her return to Washington on the eve of the invasion, which led to a break in diplomatic ties during the 1991 Gulf war which evicted Iraqi troops from Kuwait, Ms. Glaspie worked on Gulf issues at the State Department. In April, she took a year off to teach political science in university.

Unpaid Arab dues threaten Paris institute

PARIS (AFP) — Unpaid contributions promised by Arabs are threatening the future of the French capital's prestigious Institute of the Arab World, the institute's president, Edgard Pisani, said in an interview published Tuesday. Mr. Pisani, a former minister, said Arab countries had run up a \$53 million deficit in unpaid contributions. France provides 60 per cent of the institute's budget and Arab League members are supposed to contribute 40 per cent. "I am threatened with suffocation. The next few weeks will be crucial," Mr. Pisani said in an interview with the daily Le Figaro. He urged the French government to try to persuade Arab states to cough up their contributions, or face having to meet the deficit itself. "The Arab states are institutional bad payers," Mr. Pisani said, explaining the chronic financial situation which had sparked a number of strikes and a reduction in the institute's staff. He added that some states did not pay for "political" reasons, but the institute had to be "secular."

Egypt seeking to cut costs of Sinai force

CAIRO (R) — Egypt wants to cut the costs of the multinational force that monitors the Egyptian-Israeli border, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said on Tuesday during a visit to Cairo by Israeli President Ezer Weizman. "There is no problem with the multinational

force. It's just the question of the high expenses. This is what was discussed," Mr. Musa told reporters. "It's not the existence of the force (that is at stake), but how to reduce the costs." The minister said Egypt, Israel and the United States split the costs three ways but did not say how much they were. The United States provides the largest contingent, about 1,000 men. The force, known officially as the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), has been in Sinai since Israel withdrew from the peninsula under the 1979 peace treaty.

400 kg of hashish seized in Lebanon

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanese drug enforcement agents seized 400 kilograms of hashish in the eastern Bekaa Valley, the head of judicial police said on Tuesday. Brigadier Salim Saleem, who heads the department that investigates drug trafficking, said the hashish was found in plastic bags in a hole in the ground on the outskirts of the city of Baalbek on Sunday. The Bekaa Valley was a centre for the lucrative drug trade during the 1975-90 civil war but authorities in 1993 began a campaign against growing, processing and smuggling narcotics across Lebanon.

Pope sends blessings to Iraq

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Pope John Paul II has asked for God's blessing on Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and his people in a written message to Baghdad, the official news agency INA reported Tuesday. "May God bless you, you and your people," the Pope said replying to a message from President Saddam congratulating the pontiff on the 16th anniversary of his rise to head of the Roman Catholic Church. The message, for which INA gave no date, added: "I call on God that the efforts deployed for understanding and collaboration bear fruit in peace and justice."

3 dead fetuses found inside baby boy

RIYADH (AFP) — Doctors have found three dead fetuses in the body of a four-month-old baby boy, a Saudi daily said Tuesday. Dr. Talal Al Maliki, head of the pediatrics department in a hospital in Assir, said the baby's mother had complained before the birth of sharp pains and strange symptoms. An ultra-sound test had shown an unidentified body inside the baby. "When he was born the child had a swollen stomach but nothing showed up in new tests to discover the cause," Dr. Maliki said, according to the daily Okaz.